AARP The Magazine

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Ouch! My Aching Knees!

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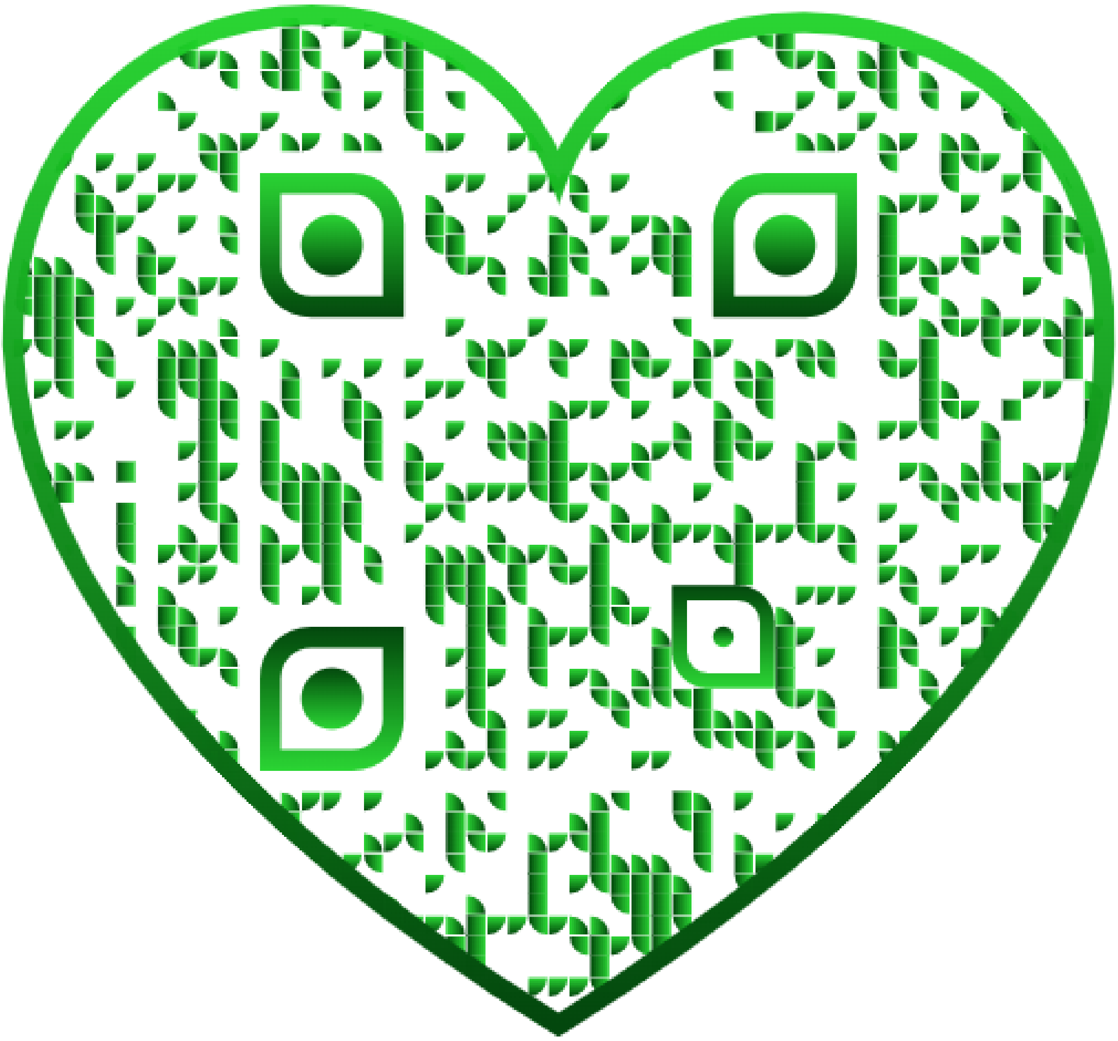

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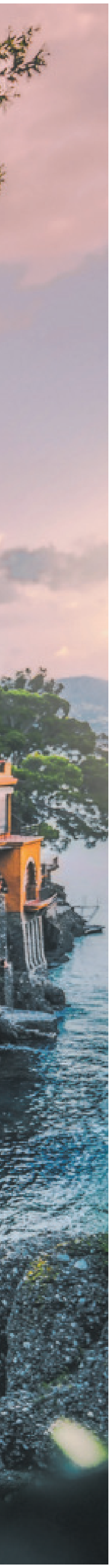

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In addition, the casual yet stylish Pool Grill offers a relaxed atmosphere to unwind, all while enjoying a satisfying meal. No matter where you dine, the wine list is extensive, featuring vintages from France, Italy, South Africa, and Chile, and the service is impeccable. With flexible dining times and the option to dine with whomever you please, guests can enjoy their meals stress-free, knowing that everything is taken care of.

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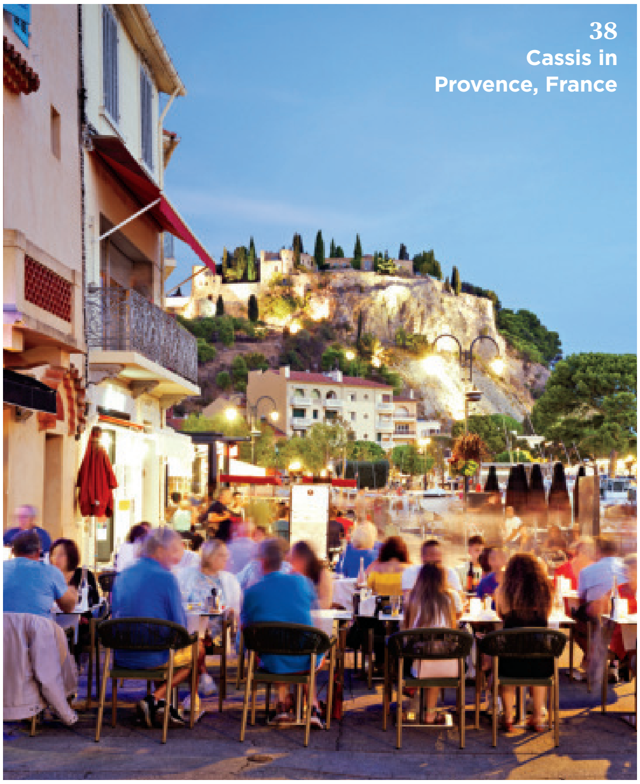

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ON THE COVER: Michelle Yeoh photographed by Pål Hansen at the Mandarin Oriental in Milan on September 21, 2024. Producer: Patrick Sampson; wardrobe stylist: Dena Giannini at A Creative Partner; hair stylist: Robert Vetica at The Wall Group; makeup artist: Soo Park at the Wall Group

Clockwise from top: Photofest; Eric Schramm; Illustration by Sean McCabe; Andy Anderson; Getty Images; Illustration by Liam Eisenberg; Jeff Lipsky; Greg DuPree. Center: Getty Images

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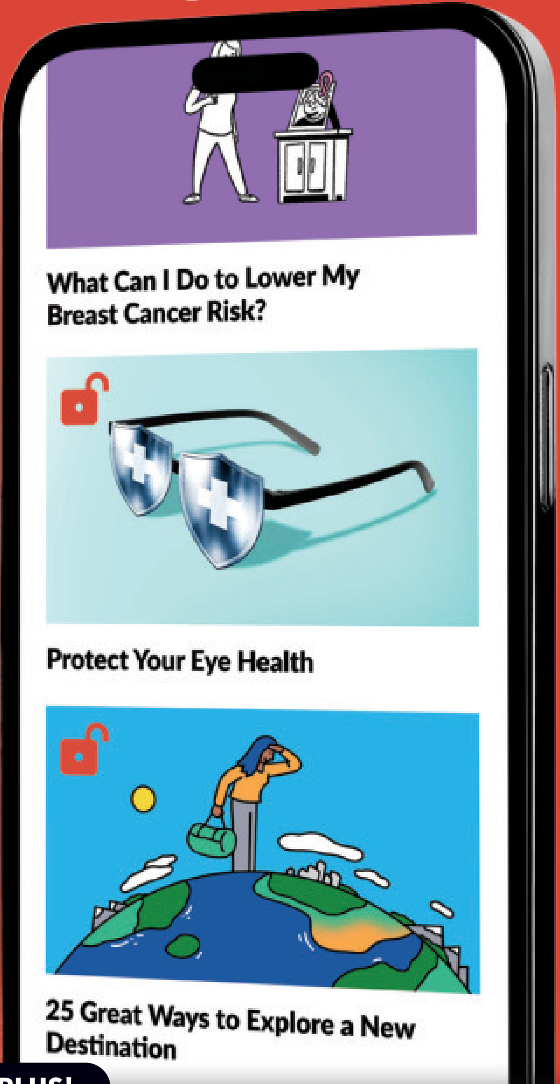

What Can I Do to Lower My Breast Cancer Risk?

Protect Your Eye Health

25 Great Ways to Explore a New Destination

ASK DR. ADAM > A top internist and cardiologist answers your medical questions.

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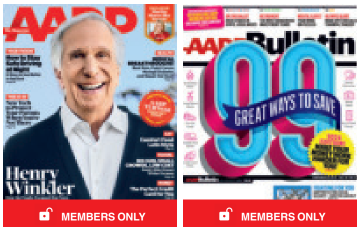

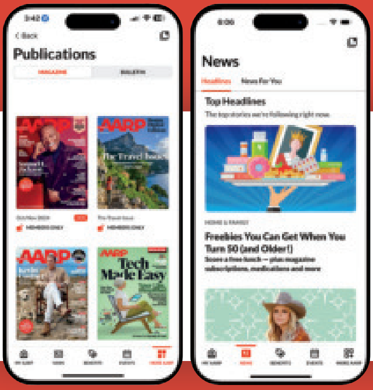

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News

Top Headlines

Freebies You Can Get When You Turn 50 (and Older!)

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Robert Love EDITOR IN CHIEF

In Praise of Strong Women

Here's to Michelle Yeoh, Glenn Close, Naomi Watts–and to all older women who keep going, no matter what

I KNOW SOMETHING about strong women. My wife, Nichol, had a brilliant 24-year career at the New York City Ballet. Many nights I watched from the seats as she rocked the house, bringing 2,500 people to their feet in a shouted chorus of *Brava*! But I was also granted morning-after access to the crippling pain following each performance, and the grit it took for her to get back to the barre. I witnessed the discipline and sacrifice behind all that grace and elegance onstage.

Nichol's mom, Gloria, was also a woman of uncommon strength. She prevailed through terrible illness in the family, bouts of unemployment, years of caregiving for her husband, Nichol's father, after he was grievously injured in a car crash after working his night shift at the post office. And Gloria carried on for more than 20 years after her husband's untimely death. When faced with adversity, this strong woman aways said, the trick is to "mentally adjust."

This is a philosophy I admire. As a student of the Stoic philosophers of Greece and Rome, I learned that we humans cannot control what happens to us, only our responses to what happens. Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius, the most famous Stoic, put it this way: "You have power over your mind—not outside events. Realize this, and you will find strength." Or as my mother-in-law said many times, "You've got to mentally adjust."

In this issue, we are writing about three women of strength and grace who have mentally adjusted to the challenges and obstacles that Hollywood throws at older actresses—and they have prevailed. Michelle Yeoh, our cover subject, has had an amazing film career that blossomed as she has matured—from a fierce martial arts fighter going toe-to-toe with Jackie Chan into an Oscar-winning leading lady. Glenn Close, our career achievement winner in Movies for Grownups this year, has one of the longest and most varied careers in film. "Fierce" is a word I would associate with Glenn and her dedication. Finally, Naomi Watts, who turned in a tour de force performance in *Feud: Capote vs. The Swans* as Babe Paley, Truman Capote's favorite Swan, is now an author as well as a Hollywood survivor. She has just written a new book on menopause: *Dare I Say It*. I say *brava* to all three.

And *brava,* as well, to all the strong women over 50 reading this, the ones who—over and over—mentally adjust to whatever life throws their way. You show the rest of us every day what it means to live with both grit and grace.

Bob

From left: Pål Hansen; Andy Anderson; Ben Watts/Trunk Archive

TheMail

SAMUEL L. JACKSON'S RELATABILITY

I loved your cover story on Samuel L. Jackson so much I read it twice. I identify as a person who stutters, and was pleased the article mentioned that he overcame his stuttering as a young man. It has always made me feel good to see his name among the prominent people who stutter. Knowing that he is a fellow person of color who stutters warms my heart! About 1 percent of the U.S. population struggles with stuttering, or nearly 3 million people. And it is never too late to seek help through speech therapy. I did, and it greatly improved my fluency.

JIM MURPHY
Bronx, New York

One of my favorite actors. He's so down to earth. 75 and fabulous!

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American Heroes
Moving Out, Moving On
Slash Your Expenses in Just One Day

Our October/November issue featured Samuel L. Jackson.

ENDING THE STIGMA

My dad went to Vietnam and every single day was a struggle. I thank Taraji P. Henson ["A-List"] so much for bringing this to light. All my life I felt I was the only one having a dad with so much trauma.

@ANILAURIE
Instagram

Thank you so much for shedding light on this, Taraji, and to your father for his service. I am the sister, the goddaughter and the wife of veterans. The trauma is real and families are in the battle with their loved ones.

SHEILA STEIN
Facebook

WE CAN BE HEROES

The "Real People: Highway Hero" article is a great inspiration to me. The truck driver Ronald Nessman reminds me to never give up on trying to make life happier and more positive. A person never knows what the next person is going through, so it is best to treat everyone with respect and love. My two oldest sons died in 2022 and 2023 and I'm still here trying my best not to give up.

MICHELE THOMAS-CARTER
Saint Louis, Missouri

MUSIC TO HEAL

Thank you for highlighting how Holocaust survivor Saul Dreier ["Real People: 'Music is Hope' "] is using music to globally share messages of peace, tolerance and resiliency. I got to meet this larger-than-life soul during his recent tour. To say that he is an inspiration would be an understatement; he is living testimony to the light and power that music offers in times of darkness. Our world needs more Sauls.

CARMEN ALIBER
Newton, Massachusetts

REMEMBERING THOSE WHO SERVED

Thank you for "The Bravest of the Brave." I was moved to tears reading what these "brothers" endured. I'm proud to have gotten to know them. *Hooah.*

TIMOTHY H. BEAULIEU
Searsport, Maine

SHE'S BACK

It is so inspiring to hear Kathy Bates embrace her real self with confidence and wisdom at 76 ["What I Know Now"]. How challenging it must be for an actor who spends her life being someone else to truly come home to herself. She continues to demonstrate we have value no matter how old we are!

DEVRA McMILLEN
Silver Springs, Florida

What a beautiful soul, and her Matlock is a must-see.

ARNELLE PIRES
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63	$32.50	$23.70	$64.00	$46.40	$95.50	$69.10	$158.50	$114.50
64	$33.50	$24.55	$66.00	$48.10	$98.50	$71.65	$163.50	$118.75
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The A List

6 Surprising Things About Naomi Watts

1 Her father died of an apparent heroin overdose when she was 7. I'm drawn to stories about grief because I experienced it very early. I had this idea that one must suffer to be interesting and dynamic and strong and prove themselves in some way—which is absurd.

2 Watts struggled with infertility (though she had two children with partner Liev Schreiber). In my mid-30s, I learned I was in perimenopause. I was hanging my head in shame, and if I ever dared to speak about it or try to open the conversation with friends, I was met with nervous laughter. I went on hormone replacement therapy very early.

3 That experience turned her into an author—and a Hollywood agony aunt. I imagined my new book as a long, cozy chat on the couch with my girlfriend. That's what I wanted. In my early 40s, I wished there was a funny, sexy fact-filled book that would make me feel calmer.

> **"Look at how many women in their 50s are doing remarkable things, sometimes the most brilliant things of their entire life."**

4 She immediately knew actor Billy Crudup was the one, and she married last year for the first time, at 54. We met at exactly the right time. With getting older comes a certain level of calm and wisdom, and a willingness to sort of let go and throw yourself into things.

5 Her nip and tuck philosophy is: Whatever! ... I have no judgment. Will I do surgery one day? Maybe. I'm not there yet, but I will never say never.

6 Her 50s are surprising her by being, well, great. We're living longer and we're not invisible. As a teen, I would never have dreamed of a life of this magnitude.

—As told to Judith Newman

The British actress Naomi Watts, 56, will publish her book on menopause, Dare I Say It, *in January. She stars in the movie* The Friend*—with Bill Murray and a Great Dane.*

MEMBERS ONLY To see our exclusive Watts video, scan code or go to aarp.org/naomiwatts

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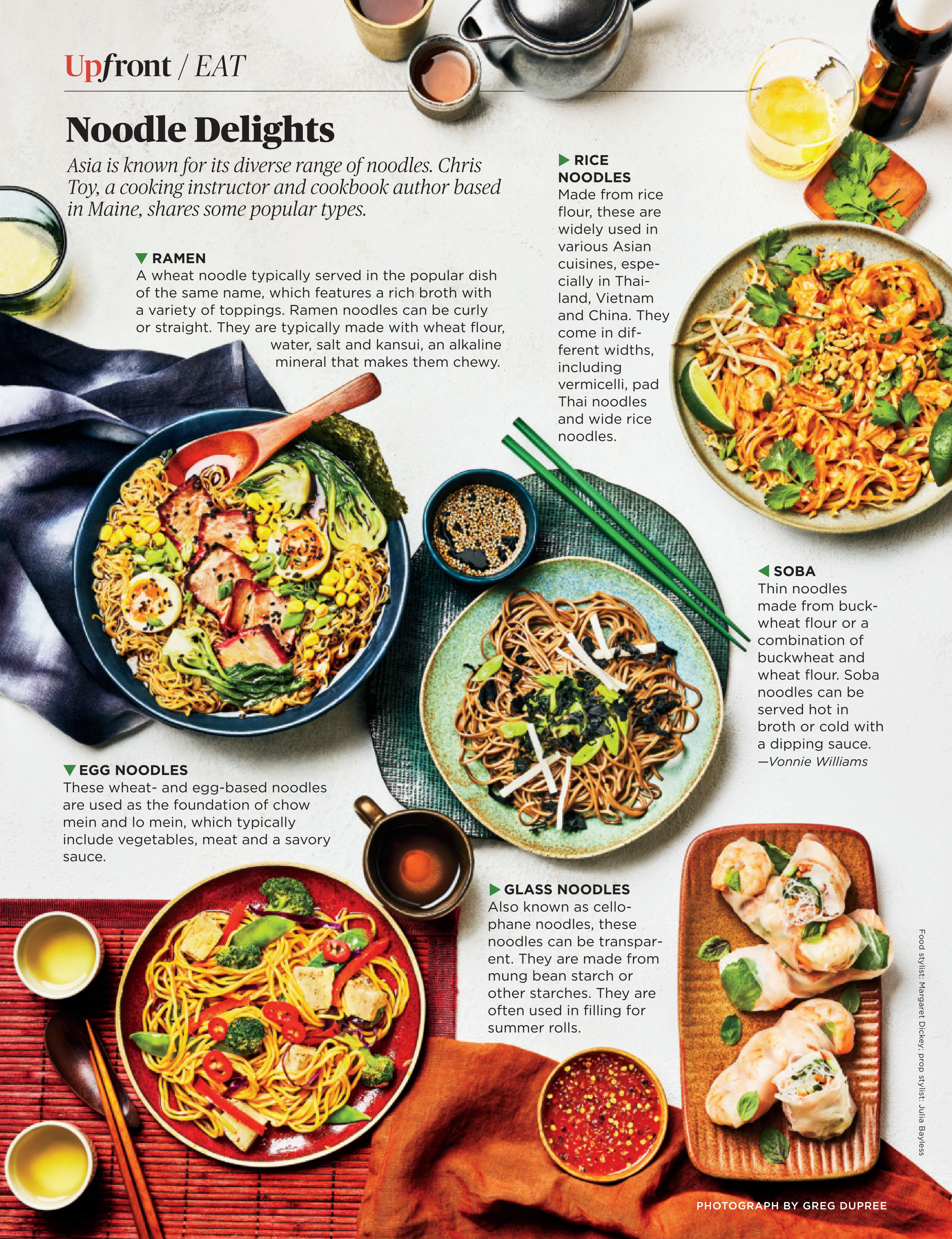


Noodle Delights

Asia is known for its diverse range of noodles. Chris Toy, a cooking instructor and cookbook author based in Maine, shares some popular types.

▶ RICE NOODLES
Made from rice flour, these are widely used in various Asian cuisines, especially in Thailand, Vietnam and China. They come in different widths, including vermicelli, pad Thai noodles and wide rice noodles.

▼ RAMEN
A wheat noodle typically served in the popular dish of the same name, which features a rich broth with a variety of toppings. Ramen noodles can be curly or straight. They are typically made with wheat flour, water, salt and kansui, an alkaline mineral that makes them chewy.

◀ SOBA
Thin noodles made from buckwheat flour or a combination of buckwheat and wheat flour. Soba noodles can be served hot in broth or cold with a dipping sauce.
—Vonnie Williams

▼ EGG NOODLES
These wheat- and egg-based noodles are used as the foundation of chow mein and lo mein, which typically include vegetables, meat and a savory sauce.

▶ GLASS NOODLES
Also known as cellophane noodles, these noodles can be transparent. They are made from mung bean starch or other starches. They are often used in filling for summer rolls.

Food stylist: Margaret Dickey; prop stylist: Julia Bayless

PHOTOGRAPH BY GREG DUPREE

FOOTWEAR FOR FIDO

Protect your dog's paws this winter

WHAT'S THE hottest fashion accessory for dogs this season? Boots.

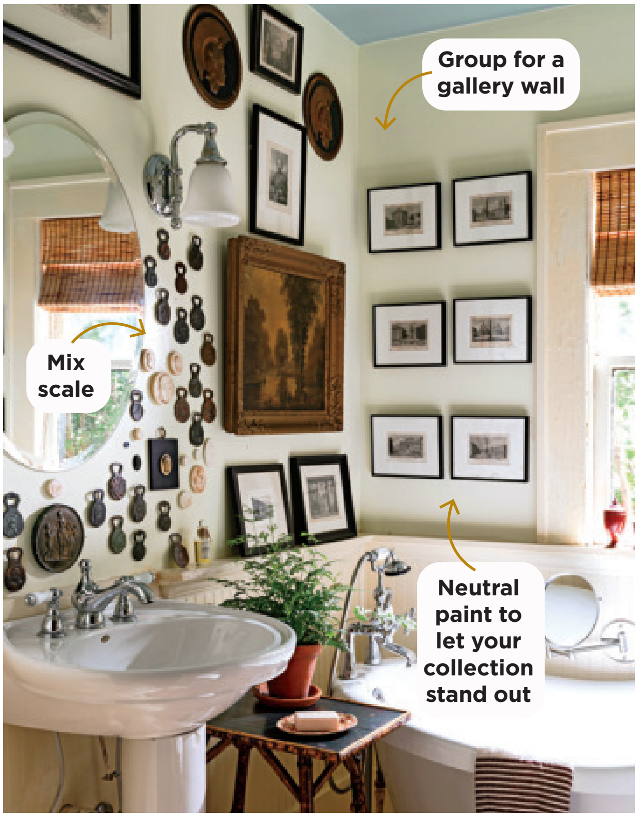
You wouldn't want to go barefoot outdoors in winter, right? So consider that when walking your dog. All that snow, ice and cold pavement can be harmful. "In freezing temperatures, wet feet on a dog can cause frostbite of the pads on the paw," says Lindsey Wolko, CEO of the Center for Pet Safety. Footwear can also protect against the dangers of sometimes-toxic deicers on walkways. Major pet supply retailers offer a variety of boot sets, usually for $30 to $35. (Fashionistas with cats, you're out of luck. That tabby is not going to stand for anything on those paws.)

If your dog resists boots, an alternative is to keep a bucket of warm water near the door to rinse their paws, Wolko suggests. Another good practice, says veterinarian Heather Berst, medical lead at animal health company Zoetis, is to rub paw wax or balm on their pads before a walk.

—Matt Alderton

The Best Room for Collectibles

Consider this spot for your prized keepsakes



Group for a gallery wall

Mix scale

Neutral paint to let your collection stand out

THOSE much-loved treasures you've collected over the years can sometimes struggle to find a home in your home. Tchotchkes may not fit in with the decor of your living spaces, changing the character of a room. Here's an idea: Displaying collectibles in a bathroom can personalize and add a little whimsy to an otherwise antiseptic space.

"You don't have to be so serious in the bathroom," says interior designer Bob Richter of Lambertville, New Jersey. Richter's own World War II–themed bathroom boasts vintage items like a U.S. Navy poster and antique glass bottles. "It feels like a curious, inviting place to be."

Sharon DellaPiazza, 55, of Berkeley Heights, New Jersey, has also put this idea into practice, displaying her mermaids and fairies, perfume bottles and some of her late mother's Hummel figurines on a wrought iron wall shelf. "It makes me happy," she says. "It's like I've stepped into a little fairy world before I need to step into the real world." *—Sheryl Jean*

How Much Is Too Clean?

Stop wiping and vacuuming all the time. A little grime might be good for you

IT'S NATURAL to worry about germs and bacteria, especially as we age and our immune systems can become weakened. But "your home isn't a petri dish growing scary diseases at every turn," says microbiologist Shaun Veran. And some exposure to microbes, Veran says, is like a "workout for your immune system, teaching it to recognize and fight diseases more effectively."

Gastroenterologist Robynne Chutkan, author of *The Microbiome Solution* and host of the *Gutbliss* podcast, says a good rule of thumb is to clean your kitchen nightly and the rest of the house weekly. More frequent cleaning is needed only for visible dirt, grime or mold or when someone in your household is ill.

What else can you do? Introduce good microbes into your home, says microbial ecologist Jack Gilbert of the University of California San Diego.

- Open windows.
- Let pets romp indoors.
- Grow potted plants.

Studies show that these three things lead to a higher level of beneficial microbial diversity inside the home, Gilbert says. *—M.A.*

Clockwise from top left: Illustration by Xaviera Altena; Ali Harper; Stocksy

The Best Months to Visit Europe

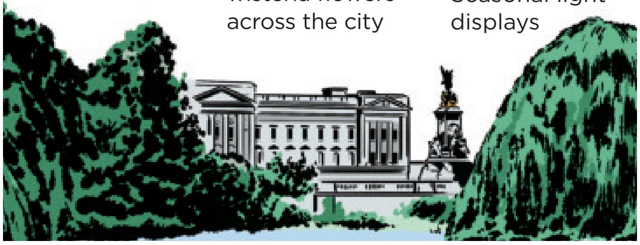
The month you travel overseas can make all the difference in your experience. To avoid heat and crowds in most cities, avoid the summer and look to other seasons instead

London

MAR–MAY Royal parks and gardens blossom; wisteria flowers across the city

SEP–OCT Lovely leaves and pubs

NOV–DEC Seasonal light displays



Copenhagen

JUN–AUG Long, bright days and mild temperatures to enjoy canals, sidewalk cafés and Tivoli Gardens park

Madrid

MAR–MAY Hibiscus, gardenias and roses bloom

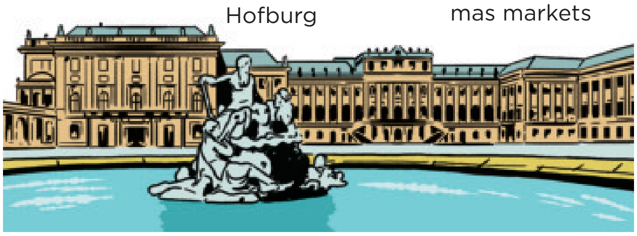
OCT–DEC Autumn Festival and Christmas markets

Vienna

APR–MAY Pleasant weather at top attractions Schönbrunn Palace and the Hofburg

SEP Start of opera season, when tickets are discounted

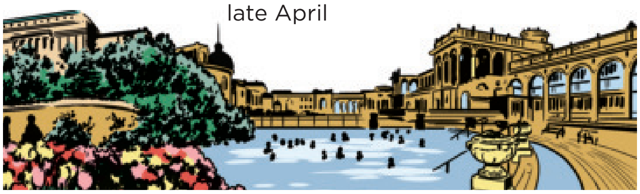
NOV–DEC Christmas markets



Budapest

MAR–MAY Pleasant weather and cafés reopen their terraces; Budapest Spring Festival starts in late April

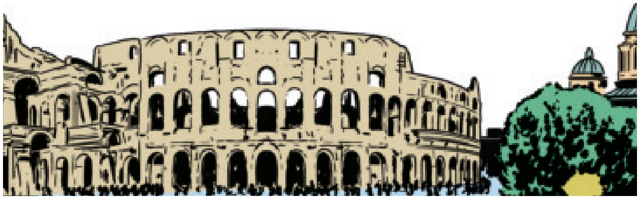
SEP–OCT Vibrant fall colors; cooler weather for soaking in the thermal baths



Rome

APR–MAY Mild, sun-drenched days; historic gardens alive with spring blooms

OCT Crisp air and gentle sunshine; changing colors in Villa Borghese Gardens



Athens

MAR–MAY Sunny, mild weather; more elbow room at the Acropolis and Ancient Agora

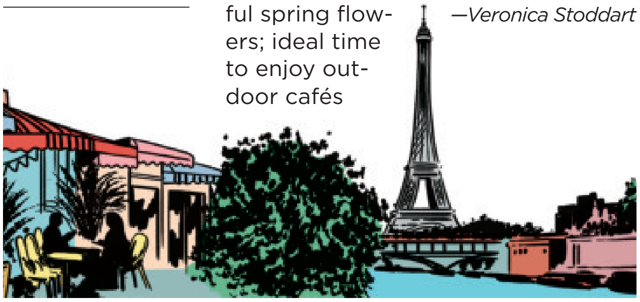
SEP–OCT Seasonal cultural festivals and performances

Paris

APR–JUN Mild weather; beautiful spring flowers; ideal time to enjoy outdoor cafés

SEP–DEC Paris Autumn Festival

—Veronica Stoddart



ILLUSTRATIONS BY JOEL KIMMEL

WHAT'S THAT FLASHING YELLOW ARROW?

YOU'RE ABOUT TO make a left turn at an intersection when you see something new: a flashing yellow left arrow. What should you do?

The short answer: Proceed the same way you would when turning left with a solid green light. After yielding to oncoming traffic and pedestrians, make the turn.

So why the change if the two signals mean the same thing? Another short answer: clarity. "The concern is that drivers turning left on a permissive circular green signal might mistake that signal as implying that the left turn has the right-of-way over opposing traffic," the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) notes.

While not all signals will be converted (expect to continue to see some solid greens for left turns), communities that adopt the flashing yellow arrow can expect safer intersections. In 2020, the FHWA found that the signal can reduce crashes related to left-turn movements by 15 to 50 percent.

"It's a great addition," says Josh Dunning, vice president of AARP Driver Safety. "Left-hand turns are dangerous for everyone driving." *—Elise Ceyral*

Photo illustration by Paul Spella; Jeff Elkins

Great Winter Escapes

Get lost in a fantastic new book

The Tiny Slice

"Embracing winter is about embracing our life: all of it, the dark parts and the light. Our winter story is, in part, our life story."

—From **How to Winter: Harness Your Mindset to Thrive on Cold, Dark or Difficult Days** ***by Kari Leibowitz***

Wise Women

Many notable actresses—including ***Naomi Watts*** (see page 9)—have riffed on growing older. Now comes **Brooke Shields Is Not Allowed to Get Old: Thoughts on Aging as a Woman** (January 14). At 59, Shields is embracing what she has gained through the years (confidence, for one) and dispelling myths about older women.

#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR
ROBERT CRAIS
THE BIG EMPTY
AN ELVIS COLE AND JOE PIKE NOVEL
BROOKE SHIELDS IS NOT ALLOWED TO GET OLD
BROOKE SHIELDS IS NOT ALLOWED
BABYLONIA
COSTANZA CASATI
Kari Leibowitz, PhD
How to Winter
ZORA NEALE HURSTON
THE LIFE OF HEROD THE GREAT
ALICE FEENEY
BEAUTIFUL UGLY

Reviews

Beautiful Ugly
by Alice Feeney
Author Grady Green's journalist wife mysteriously disappears. A year later, unable to write, he heads to a remote Scottish island for inspiration, but strange happenings make his stay far from idyllic. *(January 14)*

Babylonia
by Costanza Casati
From the author of 2023's *Clytemnestra*, this historical fantasy is based on the myth of the Assyrian orphan-turned-queen Semiramis. With treachery, power plays and a love triangle, it's a true escape. *(January 14)*

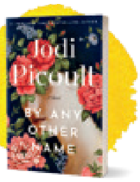
The Big Empty
by Robert Crais
Crais' entertaining new thriller again features detective Elvis Cole and partner Joe Pike. While investigating a murder, the two are targeted by criminals in a case that grows ever more twisted. *(January 14)*

From the Ashes

Zora Neale Hurston, the Harlem Renaissance author, left behind an unfinished novel that nearly burned in a fire. A salvaged version, **The Life of Herod the Great**, comes out January 7.

Author Interview

Join ***Jodi Picoult***, who will talk to The Girlfriend Book Club about her novel **By Any Other Name**, on December 17 at 7:30 p.m. ET (and streaming thereafter) at thegirlfriend.com/bookclub.


Jodi Picoult
BY ANY OTHER NAME

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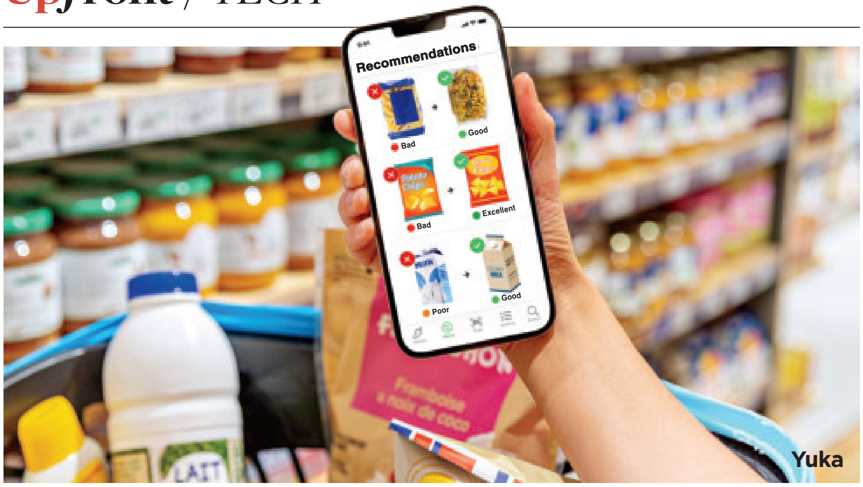

Yuka

Scan That Barcode!

It can reveal a lot about products while shopping

BARCODES ON packages aren't just for the checkout clerk. "Now we're all equipped with a barcode reader," says Bob Carpenter, CEO and president of GS1 US, which sets standards for barcoding systems. "It's called our mobile phone." Use your phone's camera to scan the lines, with the help of apps:

ShopSavvy Scan the barcode for almost any product and this app will pull up the lowest price at top retailers as well as price comparisons for sellers across the internet, with estimated shipping costs included. You'll also get product reviews from multiple sources.

MyNetDiary This app provides much of the same nutritional info you can find on the packaging, but here's the real benefit: It takes all that data on calories, carbs, protein, fat, added sugar and so on and assigns a "food grade"—from A to D—based on total nutritional value.

Yuka This app analyzes ingredients in food and body-care products and flags potential allergens, endocrine disruptors, pollutants, carcinogens or skin irritants. If a product scores low for nutrition or health, you'll get other suggestions. *—Lexi Pandell*

Ride-Hailing for Caregivers

Help for getting loved ones to their destination

RIDE-HAILING SERVICES like Uber and Lyft can help nondrivers get to doctors' appointments. But arranging a ride for someone else can be difficult. Good news: These services have been working to solve this problem, easing the process for caregivers.

Uber: The company announced an initiative called Uber Caregiver, allowing caregivers to arrange rides for another person and communicate with the driver and passenger through a three-way chat. In some cases, users also can pay with a flex card from a Medicare Advantage plan.

Lyft: This service offers Lyft Concierge, through which health care providers and other businesses can request, schedule and pay for rides on behalf of patients. Lyft also provides free or discounted rides through 211, a referral and information line that connects to local health and human services resources. *—Rob Pegoraro*

Main image: Courtesy Yuka; Getty Images, 6. Logos from left: Courtesy ShopSavvy; Courtesy MyNetDiary; Courtesy Yuka. Illustration by Delphine Lee

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Danny DeVito

On his iconic roles in Taxi *and* Always Sunny, *his go-for-it mantra and the joy of being a granddad*

Noisemaker
I was born in Asbury Park, New Jersey. I was the baby, my sister Theresa was 10 years older, my sister Angie was 16 years older, my mom had two sisters, and none of them shut up, ever. It's an Italian family, so the decibel level is out there.

A little smart aleck
I went to Our Lady of Mount Carmel School, because if your mother and father didn't know what to do with you, they gave you to the nuns.

... and still a smart aleck
I remember when Peter, my nephew, was born. I was 7 years old, and I went over and looked into the bassinet, and the first thing he did was pee on me. It was great! I don't think there's a conversation I've had with the guy over all these years where I don't bring up the fact that he peed on me.

Also an old softie
Do anything you can to keep on an even keel with your family and friends, no matter what happens in your life. That's all we have. Don't hide things. You've got to get up every day thinking about how you're going to make it easier for the people that you're working with or that you love or that you eat breakfast with. Because it's infectious; everybody starts feeling good.

Falling into the business
Growing up, I'd spend the weekends at the movies, but I actually wasn't even thinking about doing it. I got introduced to the American Academy of Dramatic Arts in a roundabout way, took a couple classes, and I got the bug. And I thought, I'm not like Cary Grant, but I got a feel for this thing. So I studied, and then I went and started looking for jobs in New York, like every other actor does. I didn't care what the description was—"male, 6 foot 4, 250 pounds"—I'd go out for the audition. Once I got in the room, I'm going to do what I'm going to do.

Becoming Louie
I wanted that part, Louie De Palma [in *Taxi*]. I walked into the room to audition in front of the four guys who created it, and I said, "One thing I want to know before we start. Who wrote this shit?" And I threw the script on the table. And I had a nanosecond of, *did I screw everything up?* Then they fell on the floor. Louie walked into their lives.

Sudden fame
I went to the market the day after the first episode aired, and people are stopping me on the street: "Hey, Louie!" They weren't calling me Danny. After a couple of days of this, I called my publicist, and said, "This is really crazy. People are chasing me down the street." He says, "Danny, you don't have to worry until that stops happening." Now it's all, "Frank, Frank, Frank!" because of *It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia*, which is good. The fans are all you have.

Still evolving
I think I'm bolder than I've ever been—I don't monitor myself as much. I do say things that are, like, pretty far out, that are really weird, and sometimes I'm inappropriate. But I am always respectful, and that's because of my two sisters, I swear to God. You have to respect other people's space.

Groomer: Elissa Ruminer

PHOTOGRAPH BY JEFF LIPSKY

My happy place
Since my two grandbabies have been born, I am just incorrigible. You gotta tamp me down in the joy department, you know what I'm saying? I'm just so lucky. Blessings have been showered down on me. I wish that for everybody. And the thing is to be aware of it. Don't let it go. Rhea [Perlman, DeVito's wife, from whom he is separated but with whom he still spends a lot of time] and I were always able to see those little, incremental changes when our kids were growing up. And I tell my kids that, with their babies: Don't miss a thing, don't look away.

A sudden case of holidays
I'm in the movie *A Sudden Case of Christmas* with my daughter Lucy, who plays my daughter. It's just a real warm, wonderful movie, and I loved doing it. As far as the actual holidays go, we have family dinners. Basically we're Italian, so you know, anybody who's around, we grab. We get to celebrate all the holidays, because Rhea's parents were Jewish, so we did all the Jewish holidays, and we do all the Catholic holidays or Italian holidays.

My mantra
It's always a good thing to be positive about life, and always get out of bed thinking today's the day you're really going to kick its ass. That's the way to do it. *—As told to Lisa Rosen*

Actor, director and producer Danny DeVito, 80, won an Emmy for his portrayal of the cantankerous Louie De Palma in Taxi, *and plays the indelible Frank Reynolds in* It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia, *now in its 17th season. He stars in the new movie* A Sudden Case of Christmas, *in theaters and streaming now.*

MEMBERS ONLY
For exclusive video of Danny DeVito, scan code with camera or go to aarp.org/devito.

From top: Aidan Monaghan/Focus Features; Michelle Faye; Bob Mahoney/Perry Well Films 2/Courtesy Netflix; Courtesy Hilarity for Charity; Ana Carballosa/Amazon.

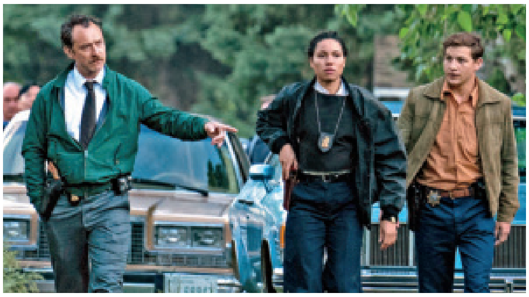
WHAT TO WATCH

Now Playing

AARP critic Tim Appelo picks upcoming movies and shows to watch

NOSFERATU

In theaters December 25 • **Willem Dafoe, 69, plays a mad professor who hunts Count Orlok (Bill Skarsgård), the vampire who's obsessed with a young German woman (Lily-Rose Depp, daughter of Johnny Depp, 61).**

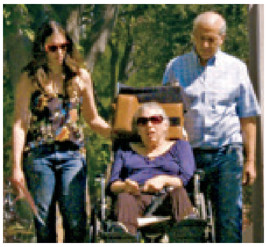


THE ORDER

In theaters December 6 • **In a fact-based thriller, an FBI man (Jude Law, 51) hunts a gang of neo-Nazi bank robbers in the 1980s Pacific Northwest. With Marc Maron, 61, as a Jewish talk show host who was murdered by the gang.**

THE SIX TRIPLE EIGHT

In theaters December 6, on Netflix December 20 • **Kerry Washington, Oprah Winfrey, 70, and Sam Waterston, 84, star in the story of the first (and only) Women's Army Corps unit of color stationed overseas in World War II.**

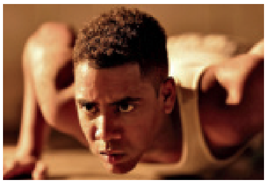


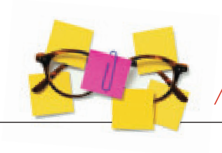
TAKING CARE

On Prime Video November 29 • **Grammy winner James Keach, 76, directs an AARP-sponsored documentary about Seth and Lauren Rogen as they navigate with humor and resilience Lauren's mother's advancing Alzheimer's disease (takingcarefilm.com).**

UNSTOPPABLE

In limited theaters December 6; on Prime Video January 16 • **Jennifer Lopez, 55, Bobby Cannavale, 54, and Don Cheadle, 60, star in the true story of Anthony Robles (Jharrel Jerome), born with one leg, who won a national college wrestling championship.**





Healthy You

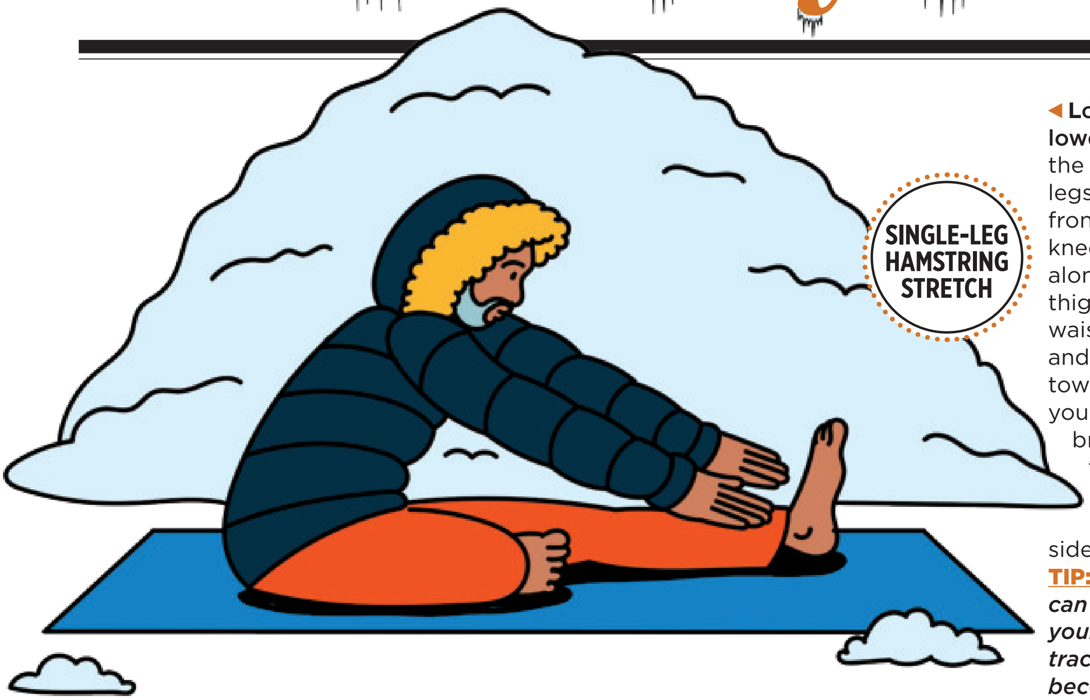
Winterize Your Body

These 6 moves will help keep you limber and balanced when the weather turns nasty

By MYATT MURPHY

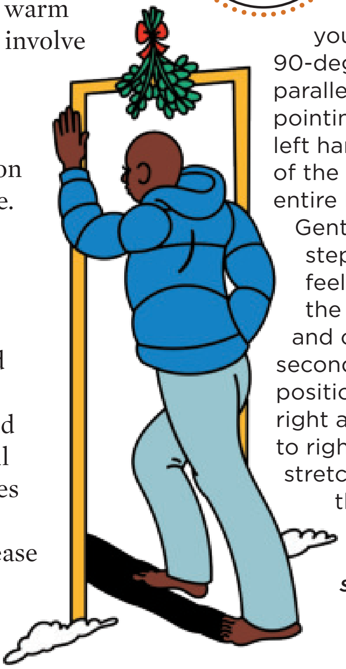
EVEN IF YOU'RE LUCKY enough to live with year-round warm weather, chances are the next few months are going to involve a natural slowdown in your physical activity, thanks to fewer hours of daylight and the hectic schedule of the holidays. "We all experience some degree of hibernation when winter comes," says Nicholas A. DiNubile, an orthopedic surgeon and chief medical adviser for the American Council on Exercise. "But less outdoor activity and more chronic sitting causes four areas to tighten in almost everyone during the colder months, regardless of age or activity level."

Specialists refer to these four body areas as BACH: the Back (lower), Anterior deltoids (front of your shoulders), Calves, and Hamstrings (back of your thighs). Let them tighten up over the winter, and not only do you put yourself at risk of neck, back and shoulder pain but, come spring, you might be more likely to pull something besides weeds. Incorporate these six simple exercises into your weekly routine, however, and you may improve your balance and flexibility, quiet those creaky body parts, and decrease your risk of falls this winter and injuries come springtime.



SINGLE-LEG HAMSTRING STRETCH

◀ **Loosens the hamstrings, lower back and calves.** Sit on the floor (or bed) with your legs extended straight in front of you. Bend your right knee and tuck your right foot along the inside of your left thigh. Slowly bend from your waist (don't hunch forward) and reach with both hands toward your left foot as far as you can. Hold for three deep breaths, then switch sides to reach toward your right foot. Alternate from left to right to stretch each side three or four times. **TIP:** ***Instead of reaching, you can slide your hands down your extended leg to help track your progress as you become more flexible.***

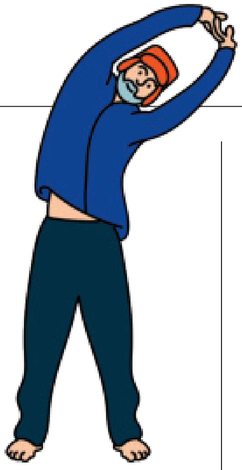


DOORJAMB STRETCH

▼ **Loosens the anterior deltoids.** Stand inside an open doorway and raise your left arm out to the side with your elbow bent at a 90-degree angle, upper arm parallel to the floor, fingers pointing upward. Place your left hand flat along the frame of the doorway so that your entire lower arm rests on it. Gently lean (or take a tiny step) forward until you feel a slight stretch within the front of your shoulder and chest. Hold for 8 to 10 seconds, then switch positions to stretch your right arm. Alternate from left to right until you've stretched each side two or three times. **TIP:** ***Keep your elbow in line with your shoulder at all times.***

Illustrations by Liam Eisenberg; Top: Photo Illustration by Doug Chayka

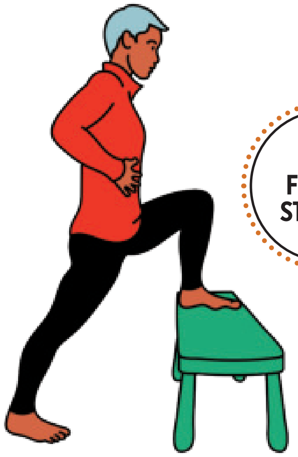
PILLAR STRETCH



▶ **Improves shoulder mobility, posture, and rotator cuff function—as well as extends your spine.** Stand straight with your feet hip-width apart and your hands clasped in front of you, fingers interlaced. Keeping your hands together, extend your arms over your head and turn your palms outward. At the top of the stretch, your arms should be straight overhead with your palms facing the ceiling. Hold for 20 to 30 seconds.

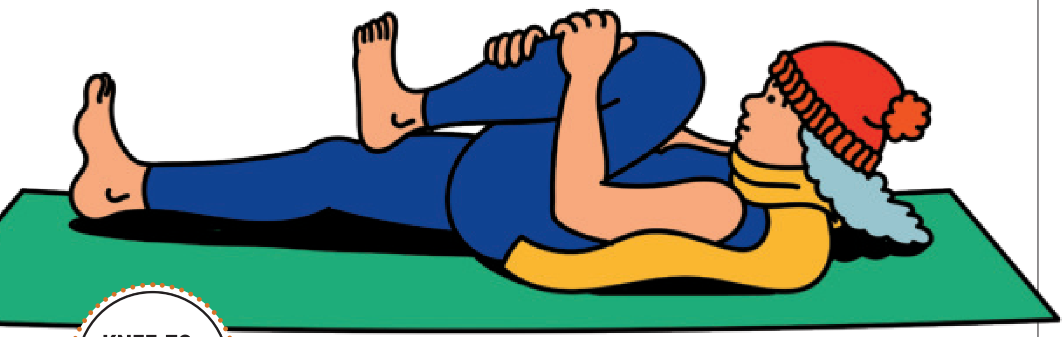
TIP: ***For an extra stretch, keep your arms extended above you and gently lean as far as you comfortably can to each side.***

HIP FLEXOR STRETCH



◀ **Loosens the hips and lower back.** Stand in front of a sturdy bench or chair. Lift your left foot and place it on the seat of the chair, and rest your hands on your hips. Keeping your right leg straight, toes pointing either forward or slightly inward (whichever feels more comfortable), gently lean forward until you feel a stretch in the front of your right hip. Hold for 10 to 20 seconds, then step down so both feet are firmly back on the ground. Switch positions, placing your right foot on the chair, and again lean forward until you feel the stretch in your left hip. Alternate from left to right until you've stretched each side two to three times.

TIP: ***As you lean forward, be sure to keep your back straight and your heel on the floor the entire time.***



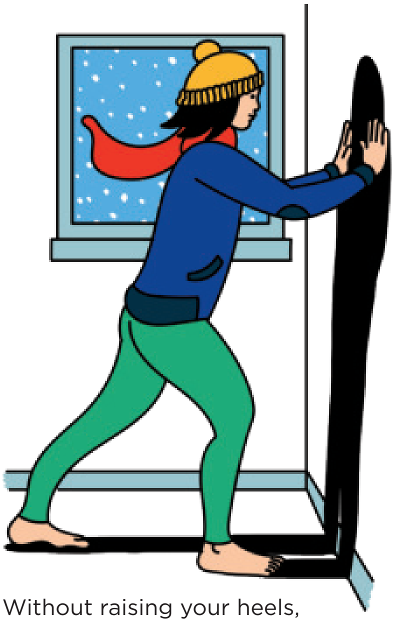
KNEE-TO-CHEST STRETCH

▲ **Loosens the lower back.** Lie flat on your back on a bed or exercise mat, knees bent and feet flat. Raise your left knee toward your chest and grab your leg below the knee with both hands. Keeping your back flat, gently pull your left leg into your chest as far as you comfortably can, hold for 3 to 5 seconds, then lower it back down. Repeat the stretch with your right leg. Stretch each side four to six times.

TIP: ***As you become more flexible, try grabbing both knees at the same time.***

STANDING WALL STRETCH

▼ **Loosens the calf muscles and the Achilles tendon.** Stand facing a wall with your hands flat against it. Take a small step back with your left foot so your legs are in a split stance (right foot forward, left foot back). Your feet should be flat on the floor and your arms fully extended.



Without raising your heels, gently bend your right knee until you feel a stretch in the calf muscles of your left leg. Hold for 6 to 8 seconds, then switch positions (left foot forward, right foot back) and repeat with your right leg. Alternate from left to right until you've stretched each leg two or three times.

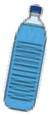
TIP: ***Don't look down or arch your back.***

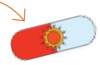
Journalist Myatt Murphy has written nearly two dozen books on health and fitness.

Winter Tune-Up

Beat the cold weather blahs with this 'nutritional antifreeze'

Staying hydrated and maintaining optimal levels of vitamin D are crucial for muscle function, bone strength, and fighting off illness. But for many, winter means less time outside absorbing vitamin D from the sun, says DiNubile. "Plus, the heat from indoors can dehydrate you just as easily as being outdoors." DiNubile recommends taking what he calls "nutritional antifreeze": Drink a minimum of 64 ounces of water and take a vitamin D supplement each day. For those under 70, take 15 mcg (600 IU); over 70, take 20 mcg (800 IU).





Note: Consult with your doctor before taking vitamin D supplements.

Six Memory Boosters

How to start remembering the small stuff, and the big stuff, more easily

By LESLIE GOLDMAN

THE NEXT TIME you lose your keys or blank on the title of the movie you saw last week, resist the urge to Google "signs of early dementia," counsels Charan Ranganath, director of the Dynamic Memory Lab at the University of California at Davis and author of *Why We Remember: Unlocking Memory's Power to Hold On to What Matters*.

"The majority of what we experience will be forgotten—and that's by design," says the neuroscientist. Indeed, the average person processes more than 74 gigabytes of information a day—nine DVDs' worth.

We expect our memory to function as an archive of the past, Ranganath says. In reality, your brain selectively whittles and prunes what gets stored so it can perform its primary jobs, which include planning for the future (say, recalling what gave you joy as a child in order to create activities for your grandkids) while also understanding how your past shaped who you are (crucial to healing from trauma and boosting self-awareness). Other skills on your memory's résumé include decision-making, imagining and communicating.

For most adults, momentarily blanking on a friend's name or misplacing a credit card don't foreshadow imminent cognitive decline, though they do become increasingly common when we get older. (Not recognizing a friend or getting lost in familiar places, on the other hand, warrants concern.)

Our knowledge of the world and our lived experience "remain relatively intact in healthy aging," and may even increase with age, says M. Natasha Rajah, a professor of psychology at Toronto Metropolitan University. That said, "recall and memory for contextual details (for example, where you parked your car in the lot) declines significantly, and this decline arises in midlife. Menopause negatively affects this type of memory in some females too."

Which is why so many of us are still poking around, trying to find our keys. So consider these proven strategies to boost your memory and make everyday life a little easier.

TURBOCHARGE TIP #1

Reverse the 'doorway effect.'

▸When you enter the kitchen with a sense of purpose, only to freeze—*Why did I come in here?*—you're experiencing what Ranganath calls an "event boundary," commonly referred to as the "doorway effect."

Whether you're leaving a store, boarding a plane, walking from one room to another—any time your perception of your environment changes—your brain creates mental bookmarks called event boundaries that divide your day into distinct before-and-after sections for easier recall later on. If you're in the living room when you realize you've left your eyeglasses in the kitchen, an event boundary is created the moment you enter the kitchen.

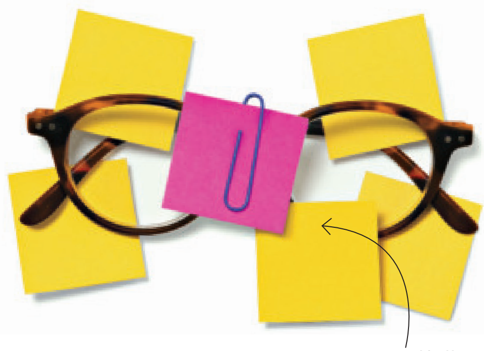
The problem, Ranganath says, is the brain is easily distracted by the fresh sights, sounds, thoughts and emotions accompanying any new event boundary, causing it to temporarily abandon the thoughts that led up to it. Unless you're actively mentally repeating *get glasses from island* as you enter the kitchen, your

Getty (3)

PHOTO ILLUSTRATIONS BY DOUG CHAYKA

brain will glom on to the new colors and smells (*Are those cookies?!*) and, *poof*, there goes your memory. (The same thing happens when you're in the middle of a task and you stop to answer a phone call; you might struggle to remember what you were doing before the call came in.)

If you've lost the thread, try to recall what you were thinking about back in the previous room, or physically return to the room you were in.



Mindfully noticing details of where you place everyday items will help them stand out.

TURBOCHARGE TIP #2

Use the pink Post-It trick.

▸People often lose track of their most-used items because our novelty-loving brains tend to gloss over routine activities like plunking down a wallet.

"It's not that you don't have any memory of where you've put your glasses," Ranganath says. "It's that you've put your glasses in many, many places," so searching for them is like scanning hundreds of yellow Post-It notes and expecting one to jump out.

Be more intentional when setting down frequently misplaced items; mindfully notice the smell of the lilies or the crumbs on the table where you're leaving your glasses. These details act like neon pink sticky notes in a sea of yellow ones.

TURBOCHARGE TIP #3

Become a monotasker.

▸Thanks to modern technology, you can chat on the phone as you play a word game, check the likes on your Facebook post and dismiss the weather alert warning of incoming rain. But any interruption of a conversation or a task creates another event boundary, Ranganath says.

"Every time you shift back and forth between two tasks, there's a lag as your brain reorients," says Constance Schmidt, professor emeritus of psychology at Middle Tennessee State University, who studies media multitasking. "You need to remember where you were before you were distracted, and it takes cognitive effort to resume the original task."

Even micro interruptions you think you're ignoring, like a text that's barely popped up before you swipe it away, are disruptive. "For that fraction of a second," Schmidt says, "your attention is captured, and interruptions have cognitive costs." As Ranganath puts it: "Even if you don't check the text message, you've already lost the battle."

Turn off all notifications and alerts except those deemed absolutely essential and practice focusing on one task at a time, blocking out time chunks for checking email or social media. If tech addiction makes monotasking feel impossible, try an app blocker like Cold Turkey (getcoldturkey.com) or Freedom (freedom.to). You dictate which sites to block and for how long; the app blocker does the dirty work for you.

TURBOCHARGE TIP #4

Read a novel.

▸When evaluating new patients, one of the first questions Washington, D.C., neurologist and neuropsychiatrist Richard Restak asks is, "Are you much of a reader?" Former avid readers who've stopped altogether may be battling depression or vision issues. But if the patient's response includes some variation of, "I used to read lots of fiction but not anymore," that's a red flag for potential cognitive decline, says Restak, a clinical professor of neurology at the

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George Washington University School of Medicine and Health Sciences and author of *The Complete Guide to Memory: The Science of Strengthening Your Mind*.

Fiction, he says, "is a challenge to your working memory," which has to follow a plot, keep track of multiple characters and engage with the text. Your memory isn't nearly as challenged by nonfiction, which lets you skip around based on what you find interesting without compromising comprehension.

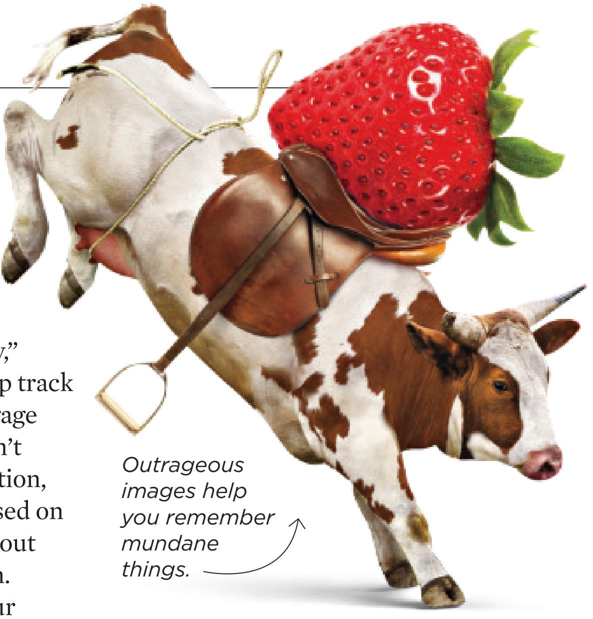
Restak says you can flex your working memory by picking fiction over nonfiction (at 82, his current favorites include novels by Elizabeth Bowen and J.G. Ballard).

TURBOCHARGE TIP #5

Create a giant strawberry and make it ride a cow.

▸When five-time USA Memory Champion Nelson Dellis needs to memorize as many decks of cards as he can in an hour—his personal best is 20—he turns to mnemonics, a category of memory tools that includes creating outlandish visual images, like that cowboy berry. Other useful mnemonic tools include acronyms (Roy G. Biv, for the colors of the rainbow) and acrostics (My Very Excellent Mother Just Served Us Noodles, for the names of the planets).

Dellis, who was inspired to train for memory championships when his grandmother passed away from Alzheimer's disease in 2009, says mnemonics work by turning mundane information into dazzling visuals. A grocery list containing strawberries, milk and broccoli is boring. A giant strawberry riding a cow into a backyard planted with cartoonish broccoli trees sticks out. Try it the next time you need to memorize directions, a to-do list or what floor of the parking garage you're leaving your car on.



Outrageous images help you remember mundane things.

TURBOCHARGE TIP #6

Take more pictures with your mind.

▸The next time you're treated to a gorgeous sunset, resist the urge to whip out your smartphone and start clicking. Filtering life through a camera lens takes you out of the moment, Ranganath says, stealing "your attention away from the parts of the experience you really want to remember later on."

This isn't to say you can't film your grandchild playing soccer or your favorite band rocking out onstage. The point is to be choosy in what you document with your phone.

"Photography can orient you to the moment, and it can be helpful if you use it strategically to help you pay attention to the details that you want to remember later on," Ranganath says.

On family vacations, he tries to reserve the camera for capturing emotional high points or unique sights, like a particularly gaudy statue—although he usually insists on someone posing next to it. This way, instead of mindlessly documenting every meal or forced family photo, "you're documenting emotions."

In other words, you're capturing a memory. ■

Leslie Goldman writes on health for Cosmopolitan, Woman's Day *and other publications.*

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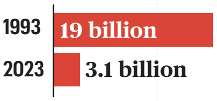
MoneySaver

Canceled Checks

When Target stopped accepting paper checks at the register this past summer, it was one of many signs of this payment method's slow decline. Here are some more By ELISE CEYRAL

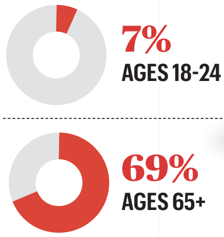
Americans use checks less ...

Checks processed by the Federal Reserve

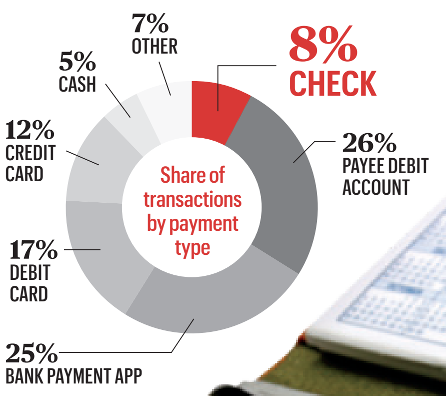


... and younger adults use them hardly at all.

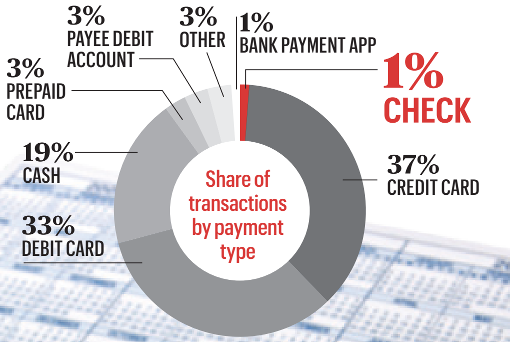
Percentage of Americans who wrote a check in one month (October 2023)



Checks aren't popular for paying bills ...



... and even less popular when making purchases.

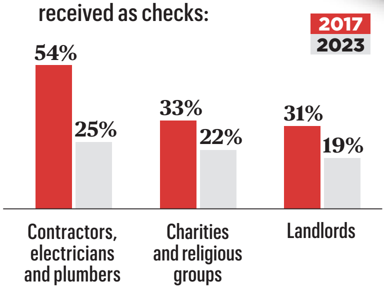


4071
Date
£2,474,655,000

The largest check ever written, tied to the 1995 merger of two British drug companies, was for £2.5 billion, or $4 billion at the time.

Although on the decline, checks are still key to how some organizations and people get paid.

Percentage of payments received as checks:



The U.S. government doesn't like writing checks either.

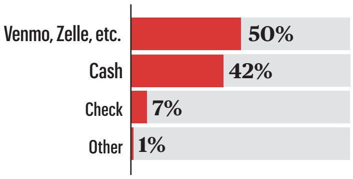
Since 2013, most Social Security recipients have been required to receive benefits electronically.

This spread: Getty Images (2)

SOURCES: KEVIN FOSTER, SURVEY DIRECTOR, FEDERAL RESERVE BANK OF ATLANTA; FINANCIAL CRIMES ENFORCEMENT NETWORK; GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS

We have other ways of settling up with friends and family.

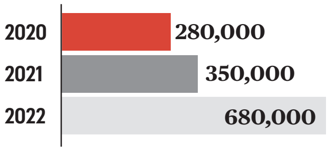
Share of person-to-person payments by method, 2023



If you're mailing a check, experts advise using the mail drop inside a post office, not a neighborhood mailbox.

Mailing checks has become riskier than ever ...

Reports of check fraud potentially related to mail theft



This activity was "fraud, plain and simple," a Chase spokesperson had to explain, "regardless of what you see online."

... and check fraud went viral last summer.

Inspired by TikTok videos, thousands of Chase Bank customers preyed on a programming glitch to deposit bad checks at ATMs, then withdrew the checks' face value in cash—up to tens of thousands of dollars.

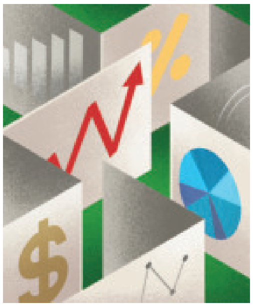
MONEY REPORT

Tricky Truths That Can Lose You Money

Some financial advice may be right ... but could still do you wrong

By ALLAN ROTH

A GRAIN OF TRUTH can be as hazardous as a pack of lies. That's the problem with some financial pronouncements. Yes, they can be true at times, or even all the time. But that doesn't mean they apply to your situation. Over the years that I've worked as a financial planner, I have encountered a lot of these misleading statements—"tricky truths," I call them—you might hear from a scam artist, a financial firm making a sales pitch or even a well-meaning friend. These are some common ones that can lead you astray.



1 "Don't focus on investment costs; what really matters is investment performance."

On the surface, this seems like the no-brainiest of truths: You get what you pay for, right? If you needed heart surgery, the last thing you would worry about is which surgeon was the cheapest. So if you want a high-performing investment, you should be ready to pony up high fees.

BUT ... When you're investing, a boatload of research indicates that the lower the expenses the better. As the investing website Morningstar put it, "The expense ratio is the most proven predictor of future fund returns—and our data agrees." Even the high fees charged by hedge funds—investment pools open only to wealthy investors—don't always pay off. Investor Warren Buffett famously won a bet in 2018 when, as he had predicted a decade earlier, a simple investment in the S&P 500—collectively, shares in 500 of the largest publicly traded U.S. companies—performed far better than a basket of hedge funds.

2 "If you had invested in this strategy back then, you would have doubled the return of the market."

You'll hear this, or a variation of it, from a wide range of sources—maybe even a small voice in your head, kicking yourself for not having bought a high-flying stock before it took off. And yes, it's absolutely true that some investments, like Bitcoin and tech stocks such as Nvidia, have trounced the market at times.

BUT ... Looking in the rearview mirror tells you little about what's on the road ahead. Multiple academic studies have found that the continuing success of top-performing mutual funds is short-lived. Research indicates that individual stocks on a roll can persist in the short run, but take on greater risk when the momentum peters out. Witness the stock of the movie chain AMC, which took less than a month in 2021 to shoot from roughly $50 to $275. It now trades around $4.20.

3 The problem with term life insurance is that you're likely to pay premiums for many years and get nothing in return.

Yes, the majority of term life policies will expire without a payout. Thus,

Illustration by Valero Doval

I've often heard the argument that you should buy permanent insurance—whole life, universal life or variable life policies.

BUT ... Later in life, the costs of some of these policies can skyrocket and, in retirement, you might not be able to afford the premium. Term life is very cheap compared to permanent insurance, so I'd rather buy term life and invest the money I've saved.

Just as I'm very happy to have no need to collect on my home or car insurance, I'm quite OK to have a term life policy expiring worthless.

Illustration by Valero Doval

4 "We have beaten the S&P 500 index over the past decade."

It's certainly possible that the investment someone is trying to sell you has risen in value at a faster rate than the S&P 500, the most commonly used benchmark for U.S. stocks.

BUT ... Beating the index doesn't mean you're beating the market. That's because the standard S&P value you see in the news measures only the price appreciation of the stocks in the index, not the dividends they pay. Since 1926, nearly one-third of the S&P's total return has come from dividends; in the last 10 years, while the index has risen about 190 percent, the total return of the S&P, with dividends reinvested, was 250 percent. So comparing the total return of Brand X investment to an index's price appreciation is like comparing apples to crab apples.

5 Customers who switched their car insurance to us saved an average of $432 a year.

I'm willing to believe the ads I see with statistics like this. I have no reason to doubt that companies making such claims are telling the truth.

BUT ... The ads don't say how many potential customers checked out the new car insurance and decided not to switch. Maybe they vastly outnumbered the switchers. And maybe the people who switched ended up with a lower level of protection than they had with their previous insurer—not the same protection for a lower price. In any case, it's always a great idea to shop around periodically for auto insurance and homeowners insurance to see if you can get a better deal.

6 Index investing is conservative and guaranteed to underperform the market.

It's true: Broad index investing done right will get the return of the market less fees. Let's say you put $10,000 in a total U.S. stock market index fund with an expense ratio of 0.05 percent. (That's five-hundredths of 1 percent of your account value per year, a realistic fee for an index fund.) If the stock market goes up 7 percent in a year, you wouldn't end up with $10,700—your original investment plus a 7 percent return—but $10,695. So yes, you're $5 short of the market performance.

BUT ... Compare that to putting the same $10,000 into an actively managed mutual fund, where a more likely expense ratio is 0.65, or almost two-thirds of one percent. Assuming the fund matches the market's return (though odds are against it over time), you'd end up with about $10,635, or around $65 less than the market's return. Compound that over several years and the higher cost of an actively managed fund will make a much bigger dent. ■

Allan Roth is a longtime financial planner based in Colorado and a regular contributor to AARP.

Jean Chatzky
TO THE RESCUE

Was This Estate Plan a Mistake?

A trust would protect her assets, she was told. Then she began to have her doubts

Kuhnley wasn't sure what she'd bought.

THE PROBLEM

After her 44-year marriage ended in divorce, Carol Kuhnley attended an estate planning seminar in 2022. "I just wanted to rewrite my will," she said. Kuhnley, 73, a retired medical technologist, got the new will plus something unexpected: an irrevocable trust. If she needed long-term care one day, she was told, Medicaid would pay, while the trust would shield her assets for her two grown daughters, one with special needs. "I had never heard of a Medicaid trust before," she said. Instructed to move her assets into the trust, she retitled her house, then froze. "It's intimidating," she said. "It can't be changed." Her question for me: Was she doing the right thing?

THE ADVICE

First, some basics. If Medicaid is paying for your long-term care (Medicare doesn't pay for nonmedical care), you're limited to $2,000 worth of assets in your name, not counting certain things, such as a car or a prepaid funeral. (Spouses can retain the family home and some additional assets.) To qualify for Medicaid without spending their nest egg on care, some people put assets into an irrevocable trust. Then the assets are no longer yours; they are held for the beneficiaries you designate. Importantly, there's also a "lookback" rule: In nearly all states, assets you put into an irrevocable trust or give away within five years of your application for Medicaid will temporarily disqualify you from the program.

To assist Kuhnley, I consulted John Midgett and Letha McDowell, experienced attorneys who practice elder law in Kuhnley's home state of Virginia. (Regulations for implementing Medicaid are state-specific.) Some questions they addressed:

Does a trust make financial sense for Kuhnley? Maybe. Say she needs care five years from now. By one estimate, a semiprivate room in a Virginia nursing home will cost $10,700 a month. Over five years, that's $642,000—a calculation Midgett uses to determine the usefulness of Medicaid planning. Kuhnley's retirement accounts and her home's value add up to more than that, so she could benefit from a trust, Midgett thinks.

What are the moral issues? "You have to be able to say, 'I'm going to give away this money so I can qualify for a poverty-level program.' A lot of people can't do that," says Midgett. "But there's also no requirement saying you can't take advantage of the rules as they're written."

What are the family dynamics? If Kuhnley's younger daughter had control of the trust, could Kuhnley trust her not to misuse the assets? She said yes, but also noted that the relationship between that daughter and the one with special needs is fraught. She wondered if she was setting them up for future trouble.

Is this the only planning option? No, McDowell said. Kuhnley can kick the can down the road. If she moved assets into a trust at the point she needed long-term care, McDowell said, she'd spend her own money for the first five years and then qualify for Medicaid. Anything left in the trust would be protected.

THE OUTCOME

One last question turned out ot be decisive: What took priority—an inheritance for her children or her own care? Kuhnley chose herself. "I should firstly be concerned about my own needs," she said. So for now, she isn't moving more assets to the trust. "I had these documents drawn up without asking enough questions and without understanding the answers to the questions I did ask," Kuhnley says. You might think twice yourself before doing something similar. ■

! Want Jean Chatzky to write about helping you sort out your financial problem? Email rescue@aarp.org.

Matt Eich

! Get 20 percent off estate plans created online through Trust & Will. Learn more at aarp.org/estate-plans.

This Is 50

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WHY, KNEE, WHY? P. 30
MENOPAUSE RETREATS P. 31

THE GEN X HOLIDAY MOVIE CHECKLIST

How many of these have you accomplished? *—Mike Zimmerman*

- ☐ Made others miserable with your excessive gloom (*A Charlie Brown Christmas*, 1965).
- ☐ Made others miserable with your excessive cheer (*Elf*, 2003).
- ☐ Made peace with your delinquent sibling for one day for Mom (*The Year Without a Santa Claus*, 1974).
- ☐ Spent a holiday by yourself (*Home Alone*, 1990).
- ☐ Crashed an office holiday party (*Die Hard*, 1988).
- ☐ Cursed out a customer service rep (*Planes, Trains and Automobiles*, 1987).
- ☐ Got your tongue stuck to a frozen pole (*A Christmas Story*, 1983).
- ☐ Resolved to be a better person—and acted accordingly beyond New Year’s (*Scrooged*, 1988).

ON AGING

Minnie Driver

Q: Now that you’re in your 50s, are you making any lifestyle changes?

A: No, I’m just carrying on living my life. I refuse to subscribe to age as the benchmark of anything except wisdom and continued curiosity. I surf every day. I do all the stuff I’ve always done. I watched both my parents live to a great age, and they were as youthful and engaged as they ever were, right to the very end. So, yeah, I don’t make any concessions for age. I suppose I will have to at some point, but that day is not today.

Actress Minnie Driver, 54, plays Queen Elizabeth I on the Starz series The Serpent Queen. *Read her interview with Gayle Jo Carter at* ***aarp.org/quickquestions***.

21% Twenty-one percent of 55-year-olds expect to need help from their kids to cover their housing costs in retirement, compared to 12 percent of 65-year-olds and 9 percent of 75-year-olds.

SOURCE: PRUDENTIAL 2024 PULSE OF THE AMERICAN RETIREE SURVEY

RECREATION

FLIPPING FOR PINBALL

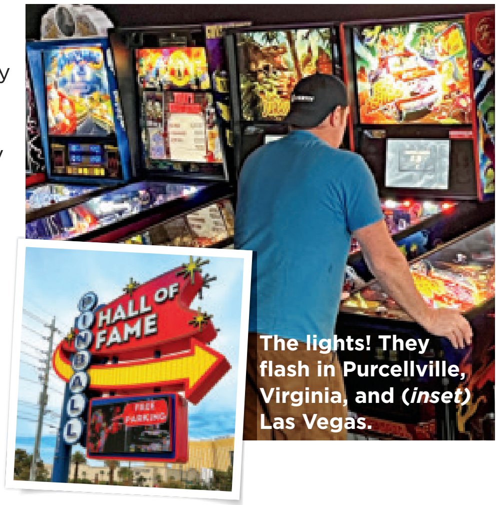
THOSE TILTING, flashing arcade machines are regaining popularity. Helping drive the trend: throwback TV shows like *Stranger Things* and online maps identifying places to play. A few noteworthy options:

★ **Pinball Hall of Fame (Las Vegas)** The 368 machines at this 25,000-square-foot site date from the 1950s to a 1992 Addams Family game to Jaws machines released in 2024.

★ **Next Level Pinball Shop & Museum (Hillsboro, Oregon)** The 27,000-square-foot facility has over 300 pinball machines and 300+ arcade games, from Pac Man to Donkey Kong.

★ **Sparks Pinball Museum (New Baltimore, Michigan)** Most of the 58 pinball machines are from the ’80s and ’90s, and feature icons of the era such as Indiana Jones and Elvira.

★ **Jackpot Pinball Arcade (Purcellville, Virginia)** This town has been called “a Gen X playground,” and the arcade’s more than 50 pinball machines are one reason. *—Ken Budd*



The lights! They flash in Purcellville, Virginia, and (*inset*) Las Vegas.

Photo credits on page 71, illustration by Sam Island.

My Mother, My BFF

Many 50-somethings say they're closer to their folks than ever. Here's why–and what to do if you feel left out

IT SEEMED UNLIKELY back when teens were rapping along to 1988's "Parents Just Don't Understand," but today, many Gen Xers count their parents among their best friends. In one recent small survey by Talker Research, 63 percent of Gen Xers said they were closer to their parents than ever before.

The phenomenon is "definitely an emerging topic" in psychological research, says Max Zubatsky, associate professor in medical family therapy at St. Louis University. "I've also heard a lot about this in groups that we run with child caregivers."

So how did members of the latchkey generation—which has been called one of the least-parented generations in U.S. history—end up so tight with Mom and Dad? Some of the shift is a natural product of aging. As people get older, they learn to better manage their expectations of others, explains Lynn Zakeri, a licensed clinical social worker in the Chicago area. So your parents' quirks have likely gotten easier on you … and yours on them.

There's also the gift of time. More Gen Xers have living parents than their parents' generation did at the same age. That means more time for elders—or adult children—to mend fences, according to Jeremy B. Yorgason, a licensed marriage and family therapist in Provo, Utah.

Paradoxically, some of the stressors that make life especially challenging for the sandwich generation can strengthen Gen Xers' bonds with their parents. Older adults today are reporting increasing rates of loneliness, and more of them are choosing to stay in their own homes than in previous generations, says Zubatsky. Ensuring that parents are safe at home, especially if they live solo, tends to require attention and support from adult children, "which creates more opportunities for the two generations to see each other," Zubatsky explains. That time and proximity can be enough to deepen family bonds.

Of course, not every 50-something still has their parents, and among those who do, the relationship is not always butterflies and rainbows. Spending more time with a toxic parent won't necessarily fix things. But if you'd like to be closer than you are, here are some suggestions.

Ask for a lesson. You give your parents tech advice. So let them educate you about something they love, Zakeri advises. It's funny how a few decades can open your eyes to how much your parents really know.

Create a family book club. Tracy Lamourie, 55, a publicist in Ontario, Canada, finds books for herself and her dad to discuss. "He really got me into history," she says.

Try a six-week letter-writing challenge. Send messages about memories you've shared, five things you love about each other, or recipes that remind you of each other.

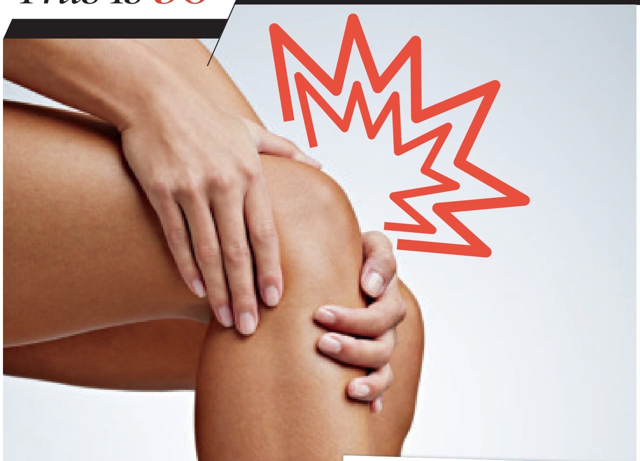
Record their stories. Tape and transcribe conversations to help them write their autobiography; compile a family history; or collect and label their old photos, Yorgason advises.

Volunteer together. Performing charitable acts for others has been shown to increase happiness and decrease stress, which can help build closeness.

Hop on a train. Or a plane. Or whatever floats your boat. When you travel together, you'll be seeing each other in a new context and making new memories. Alyson Austin, 56, shares her Wells, Maine, home with her mother, but the two still make a point of going on excursions together. "We have found things that we have in common as adults that we didn't have when I was young," Austin says.

Consider family therapy. It's not too late to consult a professional counselor, Yorgason says. Even if you don't agree on everything, you can at least agree on pleasant ways to spend time together. *—Leslie Quander Wooldridge*

ILLUSTRATION BY CHRISTINE RÖSCH



My FIRST ...

KNEE PAIN

IN ALL MY YEARS of sports, I had never had knee issues. Ankle sprains, many. Muscle strains, yep. But my knees were always reliable, until I reached my later 50s, and one morning, I felt a twinge during a jog with a friend.

Out of caution, I swore off running for two weeks but dove into painting my son's bedroom instead. Within a day, my right knee had ballooned with fluid.

"Bursitis," my doctor said. He put me in a knee brace for 10 days. My inner 30-year-old was appalled.

Once the brace was off, I fell into a disjointed pattern of walking, hiking, jogging, biking and inactivity, guided by my knee's response. The lack of predictability put me off-kilter.

When I finally visited a sports medicine clinic, the specialist diagnosed osteoarthritis. "If you ever had bursitis, you don't anymore," he told me. He prescribed physical therapy and a nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory gel.

The physical therapist assigned exercises. Three to four times a week, I cycle through stair "step-downs," standing clamshells, leg squats and lunges, heel raises, side planks with one leg raised, and forward "T" one-legged balancing.

The exercises have helped some: I can usually hike when I want to now. But my knee never feels totally normal. Still, PT has big perks. My ankles are stronger, my core strength has increased, and my lower back feels the best it has in years. These are exercises I'll be doing for life.

The jury's still out on how much I'll be running in the future, but meanwhile my balance is bombproof. It isn't what I wanted, but it's not nothing. I can hear my inner 80-year-old cheering me on. *—Joanna Nesbit*

Emergency Cash From Your 401(k)

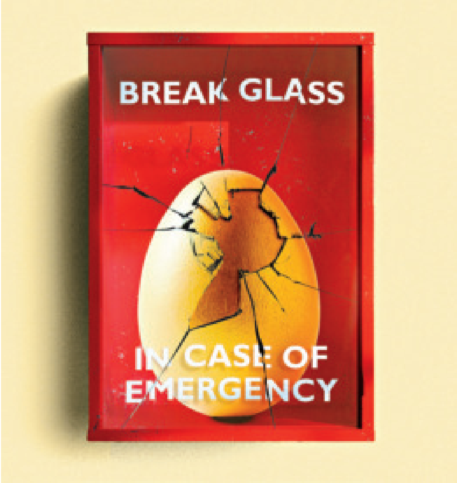
New rules let you withdraw $1,000 without penalty—but should you?

FINANCIAL EXPERTS advise keeping three to six months' worth of living expenses in an emergency fund—but that's not always easy to do. In fact, 76 percent of Gen Xers have less than six months' emergency cash, including 31 percent who have none at all, according to a recent Bankrate report.

So, what to do in a financial crisis? New rules make it easier to dip into your retirement account without penalty. But there are some pretty significant caveats.

Typically, when you take money from an IRA or 401(k) before age 59½, you pay a 10 percent penalty on top of income taxes on the money. But a new IRS rule lets retirement plan owners withdraw up to $1,000 for personal or family emergency expenses, penalty-free.

What constitutes an emergency? The IRS leaves that up to you, but examples include medical care, auto repairs and imminent foreclosure, and you may have to give your plan administrator your word, in writing, that the financial need is real.



In tough times, the new rule can be a powerful tool, says Barbara Rayll, vice president of product and solutions management for Texas-based Corebridge Financial. But there are drawbacks. "Spending out of your retirement plan not only reduces the amount you have saved but also your earning power," since the money won't be earning market returns, interest or dividends, she notes.

You can take only one distribution in a calendar year, and after you take one, you can't take another for three years—unless you pay the first one back. These limits are designed to make you pause before raiding your 401(k). And that's a good thing, Rayll adds: "You should always think twice before touching your nest egg, particularly as you approach retirement age." *—Tamara E. Holmes*

From top: Getty Images; Courtesy Joanna Nesbit; Photo Illustration by Paul Spella (Getty Images 3)

MEMBER CHECK LIST

EXTEND YOUR MEMBERSHIP NOW AND SAVE
To continue providing the high-quality information and benefits you enjoy, AARP dues will increase in 2025. This is the first increase in more than 15 years. Extend your membership at current pricing today. Visit **aarp.org/lockinsavings** or use your phone to scan this code.

WE WERE THE WORLD

FORTY YEARS AGO, a few dozen U.K. pop stars organized into a supergroup called Band Aid and recorded the smash hit “Do They Know It’s Christmas?” to benefit famine relief in Africa. In the U.S., singer and activist Harry Belafonte, with the help of superproducer Quincy Jones, organized the American counterpart, USA for Africa, to record “We Are the World.”

Both groups raised global awareness, demonstrating the power of music to pursue idealistic goals. In fact, the USA for Africa charity (usaforafrica.org) has raised more than $100 million so far to help alleviate poverty in Africa and in the United States. —*Rob Tannenbaum*

USA FOR AFRICA
We Are The World

	BAND AID	USA FOR AFRICA
CAUSE	Famine relief in Ethiopia and elsewhere in Africa	Medical aid, food and agricultural improvement in Africa
U.S. CHART PEAK	#13 on the Billboard Hot 100	#1 on the Billboard Hot 100 (*Time* magazine said it might be “the smash of the decade.”)
ORGANIZERS	Bob Geldof of the Boomtown Rats and Midge Ure of Ultravox	Singer/activist Harry Belafonte, Michael Jackson, Lionel Richie and his manager Ken Kragen
BIGGEST STARS	Sting, Bono, George Michael, Phil Collins, Boy George	Richie, Jackson, Bob Dylan, Stevie Wonder, Bruce Springsteen, Tina Turner, Ray Charles
LAST-MINUTE DRAMA	Boy George didn’t show up on time. When phoned, he took the Concorde—from New York.	Prince, who’d been noncommittal, spent the evening in a restaurant.
MOST UNLIKELY PARTICIPANTS	Three members of U.S. R&B band Kool & the Gang	Country star Waylon Jennings
UNSUNG HEROES	Ure, who cowrote the song, arranged it and played most of the instruments	Stevie Wonder, who guided Bob Dylan with a Dylan impression
AMOUNT RAISED	$12 million in the first year ($31 million in today’s dollars).	$44.5 million in the first year (about $129 million today).

Healing Holidays

A new kind of getaway to support women in menopause

GOT MENOPAUSAL symptoms … and a few days to spare? Specialized wellness retreats are gaining popularity as a way to help women navigate this often-tricky midlife terrain.

Such mini-vacations are “the ultimate intentional reset,” says Melissa Biggs Bradley, CEO of Indagare, a membership-based luxury travel agency that last year offered a four-night menopause retreat at a spa in Massachusetts.

Activities can include educational sessions as well as yoga, guided meditation and sharing circles. At the Harmony in Menopause retreat at a Florida resort in May, participants could learn about pelvic-floor strengthening, hormone replacement therapy and breath work, among other topics.

“For years, women were taught that aging is bad,” says Jess Pfeffer, whose event-planning agency hosted the retreat. “Menopause is going to happen. We can’t prevent it, but we sure can feel empowered when it happens.” —*Ellen Uzelac*

A spa treatment at Australia’s Great Ocean Road Resort, which offers menopause retreats

Photo credits on page 71

Michelle Yeoh, photographed for AARP in Milan on September 21, 2024

Michelle Yeoh Has Long Said Enough Is Never Enough—*“I want more!”*

Now the boundlessly energetic movie star is hinting she may try to slow down. But can she? Will she?

By Rebecca Sun

PHOTOGRAPHS BY PÅL HANSEN

SHORTLY AFTER she turned 60, Michelle Yeoh won her first Academy Award and got married. “We had the Oscars in March, then in July we married in Geneva. At the end of the year, we celebrated with family and close friends in Hong Kong and Malaysia. It was a crazy year,” the actress says of her 2023 adventures with her longtime partner and now husband, Jean Todt. “It was all the different levels of existence—getting the Oscar, that star you’ve always tried to reach for, and then being married—all aligning.”

And that multifaceted state of being—in which everything feels like it is happening, everywhere, all at once, one could say—has hardly abated. In the nearly two years since winning Best Actress for *Everything Everywhere All at Once*, the jet-setting icon, now 62, has released four films, including the *Wicked* musical adaptation (in theaters November 22) and three television series, and shot two major upcoming features: *Avatar 4* and *Star Trek: Section 31*. She also wrote a *New York Times* op-ed on behalf of the United Nations Development Program, for which she is a goodwill ambassador; received the U.S. Presidential Medal of Freedom; and handed out medals this summer in Paris as a recently elected member of the International Olympic Committee.

“I’m always working. I suddenly realized this year that I’ve been working too much,” Yeoh says over Zoom from her hotel suite in Prague, where she is—what else?—working, this time on the series *Blade Runner 2099*, in which she’ll star as a replicant near the end of her life.

But that plot couldn’t be farther from Yeoh’s current trajectory. “Michelle Yeoh’s been preparing for this moment her entire career,” says her *Everything Everywhere* costar and now mutually dubbed “bae” Jamie Lee Curtis, a fellow 60-something acting vet experiencing a similar bounty of roles and overdue acclaim. “Decades and decades of suiting up and showing up, and we both now have the opportunity to step into a new level of work. It’s a testament to her perseverance, her belief in herself and her understanding that these moments don’t come very often, and you must take full advantage of them.”

For 40 years, Michelle Yeoh has epitomized untouchable cool—from her early days as the first lady of 1980s and ’90s Hong Kong action cinema, to her breakout crossover roles as a Bond girl more than holding her own in 1997’s

Tomorrow Never Dies and a stoic martial arts master in 2000's *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, to her latter-day reemergence as an ice queen of a prospective mother-in-law in 2018's *Crazy Rich Asians*. And on magazine covers and red carpets around the world—glittering in priceless jewels and haute couture (she is currently a brand ambassador for both Balenciaga and Helena Rubinstein)—she radiates unfazed glamour.

The real Yeoh is indeed graceful and poised—her regal bearing gives away her daily regimen of honing her body into the exquisite instrument that it is, and even the most subtle lift of an arm or flick of a wrist instantly conjures up a decades-long highlight reel of coolly dispatching bad guys. Yet for a film legend who is so undeniably, unrelatably fabulous (the iconic emerald engagement ring featured in *Crazy Rich Asians* was famously her own, after she deemed none of the options procured by the costume department suitable), she exudes a genuine warmth and down-to-earth approachability that feels surprisingly familial.

"Everywhere she goes, she's very nurturing, and she feels very much like the matriarch of every situation she's in," *Everything Everywhere* co-director Daniel Kwan told me in 2022. And I can confirm that: Since we first met six years ago, I've had the fortune to spend time with Yeoh in one-on-one interviews, on set and at photo shoots, screenings and parties. Each time, I am struck by how much she sounds and looks like the various Asian women who have been a part of my upbringing; it's like catching up with a favorite aunt who also happens to be a massive movie star.

Her Oscar season coincided with *Wicked*'s filming schedule, so she spent the winter of 2022 flying between a London soundstage and obligatory campaign stops that ranged from L.A. awards ceremonies to New York talk shows. During that span, no matter where she was, she would have care packages sent to *Wicked* director Jon M. Chu and his family, who were on location with him in the U.K. "She would always write notes: 'This is for your babies,' 'Take care of Kristin,'" says Chu of his wife, who was expecting their fourth child at the time. "That's her in a nutshell."

Yeoh was initially hesitant to sign on to the Broadway adaptation when Chu first asked her to read the script. "Jon, it's a musical!" she told him. "You know I don't sing, right?"

She received in response a video from the film's stars, Cynthia Erivo and Ariana Grande: "You must come and join us!" they insisted from the rehearsal room. "It's imperative!" So Yeoh—who once told me she has too much stage fright to do live theater—signed on for her first musical in the role of Madame Morrible, the headmistress of the magical university where the two future witches first meet.

"I've been around her long enough to know that she has great rhythm, great tone, and that she can sing," says Chu. "She was scared, but she dove headfirst into vocal training. She did a great job."

> *"The truth is I love what I do. I thrive on working. I love being with creative people. I thrive on being challenged—because then I am learning, I am evolving."*

Previous spread: Producer: Patrick Sampson; wardrobe stylist: Dena Giannini/A Creative Partner; hair stylist: Robert Vetica/The Wall Group; makeup artist: Soo Park/The Wall Group

CHU FIRST DIRECTED Yeoh in *Crazy Rich Asians*, the breakout rom-com that showed Michelle Yeoh could be a badass without pulling off a single flying kick. As Eleanor Young, she is the intimidating, disapproving mother of the leading man, and in less skillful hands, the character could easily have been a caricatured antagonist. But Yeoh was adamant that her portrayal honor the dignity and selfless strength of all the Asian women in her life.

"Eleanor was very representative of some of the most beautiful women I've met in Asia who take a second seat, because that's how you manage your husband's position in the society," she told me then.

Her own father was a respected and affluent statesman back in Malaysia, a U.K.-educated lawyer who also ran a successful motor coach company and served for a decade in the Malaysian Senate. "He was my hero, because he was the stabilizing factor in our lives," says Yeoh. "My mom is more happy-go-lucky. I was blessed with a very balanced family."

Yeoh says her father, who died in 2014, always encouraged his children to follow their own paths. "There will be no point where you turn around and say, 'I wanted to do this, but you said I had to do that,' " he told his daughter. For the younger Yeoh, plan A was to eventually have her own ballet school. She had trained as a dancer since the age of 4, and physical prowess ran in the family: "My mom is the reason we are so sporty and outgoing. She played badminton until she was in her 70s, and now in her 80s she is still dancing and singing."

But a back injury sustained while studying at the Royal Academy of Dance in London set Yeoh on a different course. She ultimately switched her major to creative arts, with a minor in drama, and at 22 was cast in a Hong Kong TV commercial opposite Jackie Chan. Shortly afterward, a film production company offered her a contract.

"In your head, all these Chinese parents go, 'Acting? Nooo!' " Yeoh says. "But my dad's support gave me confidence as a young adult trying to do new things, knowing that if I went to Hong Kong and failed miserably, I could go home and decide again what I wanted to do."

She never had to. It took just a year for Yeoh to hit it big with her first starring role, in 1985's *Yes, Madam*, which kick-started Hong Kong's "girls with guns" action subgenre. "My Hong Kong career was really a baptism by fire," she recalls. She made three more movies over the next two years, then married her film production company's cofounder when she was 25. Cue Plan B: Retire from show business and dedicate herself to raising the children they would inevitably have. *Her* decision, she always emphasizes, was borne out of both what she calls an inability to multitask moviemaking and parenting as well as a lifelong dream of being a mother. But she and her husband were unable to conceive.

"I knew my ex really wanted a big family," she told Gwyneth Paltrow on her Goop podcast earlier this year. "I was looking at myself going, 'Ten years down the road, you can't have [a child], what are we gonna do?' In hindsight it was the smart thing to step away and not pretend that it will work out. Yes, we did love each other, but there were expectations. So it was a tough, tough thing."

After her divorce, Yeoh unretired and found success again almost immediately, this time with the 1992 classic *Police Story 3: Supercop*, in which she went death-defying stunt for death-defying stunt with Chan. A few years later, having established herself as one of Hong Kong's top stars, a producer friend encouraged her to go West.

"I was like, why?" she recalls. "I was having a ball in Hong Kong. I have my extended family there, there's the sea, the mountains, the food—why go to L.A.?" Eventually she relented: "Why not? Nothing to lose, right?"

Hollywood was a rude awakening. "People started saying, 'You're a minority.' How did I suddenly become a minority? There are how many billions of us around the world?" she says. "Also I come from Malaysia, where we are multiracial, just different cultures in a beautiful country."

The trip wasn't a total wash—she met the Bond film executives, which eventually led to landing the female lead in *Tomorrow Never Dies*. But Yeoh had to endure her share of microaggressions, like auditions that always had to justify an Asian character's ethnicity ("The scripts always had to explain why a Chinese person was there. Oh God, she's

5 Faces of Michelle Yeoh

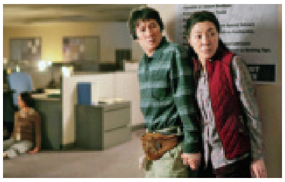
A sampling of the roles and movies that led inevitably to her Oscar moment

AS WAI LIN
***Tomorrow Never Dies* (1997)**

AS YU SHU LIEN
***Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000)**

AS MAMEHA
***Memoirs of a Geisha* (2005)**

AS ELEANOR YOUNG
***Crazy Rich Asians* (2018)**



AS EVELYN WANG
***Everything Everywhere All at Once* (2022)**

Clockwise from top right: Photofest; Courtesy The Everett Collection (4)

How I Stay Fit

YOUR BODY is like your mind—it needs to be worked. Once it's dormant, it will take a while to get it cranked up again, so I stay active. And that's all about practice. It's learning to use your time and space, incorporating exercise into your lifestyle.

The reason I'm still flexible is because I stretch every day. If I'm on the plane, I'm doing leg lifts. I sometimes stretch on a bed, where my body is supported. I shadow box.

I stretch in the bathroom when I brush my teeth. I stretch when I'm on the phone. When I'm not on a video call, I'll do my squats and lifts.

Because of the work I've done, I've had some injuries, so I'm more mindful. Also, with age, you have to work on your muscles and bone density, and need to eat well, get the proper rest and the right forms of exercise.

Filming *Blade Runner 2099* [Prime Video, tentatively set for a 2025 release] has been so much fun. Just two days ago we were doing an action sequence.

Sometimes there is no time for rehearsals. Fortunately, the way I was trained in Hong Kong was without rehearsals anyway. We'd get on the set, were told what we were doing, and we'd do it.

A stuntperson I was doing a scene with hadn't fought with me before and wanted to be careful because God forbid you hurt the actor. He said, "I'm going to reach for you to see how fast you react."

The stunt coordinator was someone I had worked with before and he said to him, "Try her!" He came at me, and my reaction was very fast. That comes with constant practice. Once you know the basics, you can string moves together.

just a weather reporter!") and constant amazement at her grasp of English (which is part of the mandatory curriculum in Malaysian schools). "I finally started saying, 'The flight over here was 13 hours, so I learned English,'" she laughs. "I didn't let them get me down."

IN EARLY 2022 on the eve of *Everything Everywhere*'s release, Yeoh told me that she and Todt, 78, a French auto racing executive (who now serves as the UN's special envoy for road safety), were determined to finally tie the knot in the coming year. The two had been engaged since 2004, within a month of their first meeting in Shanghai at an event for Ferrari; Todt was then the CEO. They came close to marrying in 2014, but their wedding was postponed upon the passing of Yeoh's father. "Jean said, 'You don't want to marry me,'" she recalls. "'Oh yes, I do want to marry you!' He kept saying, 'Why aren't we doing it?' So finally, I said, 'OK, OK, let's get the lawyers. Let's go and do it!'"

It wasn't intentional that the wedding would serve as the cherry on top of Yeoh's banner year. The couple spent nearly two years gathering all the required documentation for a marriage license in Geneva, Switzerland, where they have lived since 2009. (Todt was president of international motor sports' governing body FIA, which has an office there, until 2021.) The ceremony in July 2023 took place at a civil register office, which Yeoh imagined would be a simple "sign at the counter" affair. Even after her inner circle insisted on flying out to bear witness, she told them to expect a casual dress code. That is, until her close friend Diego Della Valle, the owner of the Schiaparelli design house, balked. "No! You're not getting married in a white shirt!" he exclaimed, dispatching his label's creative director to fashion a custom ivory corseted bridal gown for the occasion.

Yeoh's marriage is different from the traditional bond she had envisioned as a younger woman. "Jean travels a lot. I'm always working," she says. "But in a relationship, most important is the respect you show each other for what you do.

That's been very good for Jean and me."

She acknowledges that this appreciation has come in part from meeting later in life and also from wisdom gained by making mistakes and learning from them. (Todt was also previously married.) "I don't think anybody has a perfect life," says Yeoh, who remains friends with her ex-husband; his eldest daughter is one of her godchildren. "What is perfection? It's learning, evolving and developing that gets you to a place where you are content and at peace."

AS *EVERYTHING EVERYWHERE ALL AT ONCE* gained traction in theaters, Yeoh found herself, after nearly four decades and more than 50 movies, grappling with an unfamiliar role: awards darling. "I'm a mature woman, but I was a rookie at Oscar campaigning. Everybody else had been there for so long," she says of such veterans as her fellow nominees Cate Blanchett and Michelle Williams.

Fortunately, Yeoh says, filming *Wicked* was a perfect antidote to the awards hoopla, "and reminded me not just of the glitz, but the hard work of making a movie."

Yeoh was the front-runner going into Oscars night, but after sitting through most of the ceremony in the front row, she was suddenly plagued by nerves. "It struck me: My mom is at the viewing party in Kuala Lumpur with her friends and family. There's so many of them, they got dressed up, they arranged that whole event. What if I lose?" she says.

If you rewatch the clip, just before the winner's announcement, you can see the anxiety rippling beneath Yeoh's usually serene facade. The fear wasn't of losing the individual recognition—it was of letting down her community. Fortunately for everyone involved, we live in the version of the universe where Yeoh did win the Academy Award for best actress, the first Asian woman ever to do so. "Just think of all the shoulders I'm standing on," she says of Asian performers who preceded her in Hollywood. "It just landed on me to have the microphone and say we deserve to be here. It's not a responsibility; it's a necessity to speak out."

Director Jon Chu says Yeoh's Oscar coronation hasn't changed her at all. "Zero ego has come out of this. Her purity of focus on craft is as strong as it was before," he says. "I think it just gave her a hug from everyone, saying, 'We recognize you and we see you.' "

Toward the end of her acceptance speech she exhorted on behalf of all women—"Ladies, don't let anybody tell you you are ever past your prime"—an expression that struck many listeners as particularly pointed. "It was important for me to say that, because when you allow that to happen, they put you in a box," she explains now. "I mean, when you're in your [late] 30s, if you're pregnant, it's a geriatric pregnancy! Why is it that numbers matter so much, especially for women? It seems like the clock is ticking a lot faster for us."

Michelle Yeoh Keeps On Keeping On

For an exclusive video examining the actress's peripatetic career and life, scan this code with your phone or visit aarp.org/michelleyeoh.

THE OSCAR WIN has ensured that Yeoh is busier than ever, with film and TV projects, her brand commitments, her advocacy work. "I have all my scripts around me, stacks of them, and I'm trying to memorize the lines. When I was a kid in school I would say, 'One day I won't have to study anymore.' Guess what I'm doing at 62?" she laughs. "Studying!"

She concedes she is working too much, even by her manic standards. "I need to stop and enjoy the people around me," says Yeoh of her found and chosen family, which includes six godchildren as well as a new grandchild born to Todt's son and his partner.

"I have to at some point make a conscious decision to take at least a month off to spend time with family back in Malaysia, hopefully visit family in Hong Kong," she hazards, somewhat unconvincingly.

"The truth is, I love what I do," Yeoh continues with a sigh, "Even though I say I work too much, I thrive on working. I love being with creative people. I thrive on being challenged, because then I am learning, I am evolving."

Jamie Lee Curtis, who at age 64 won her own first Oscar, also for *Everything Everywhere*, understands. "The older we get, the more sedentary and isolated we get, because often we are no longer allowed to do the work that brought us into contact with others," Curtis explains. "But people like Michelle and I, who are artists, must take advantage of this moment, and sacrifice a quieter time. She is taking full advantage of it in every aspect of her work: humanitarian, philanthropic, advertising, creative."

It's fitting that *Everything Everywhere All at Once*, the movie that changed Yeoh's life in a lifetime full of inflection points, is one that contemplates the paths not taken. What would Yeoh's younger selves—the aspiring ballerina, the anticipatory stay-at-home mom—think of the journey she ultimately embarked on?

"That is a good question. When you're younger, you're too busy living it up to think about that. I went to England in my teens, then graduated and moved to Hong Kong. It was climbing and moving forward and falling down and getting up, getting new opportunities, suddenly doing action movies," she reflects. "I'm not the kind of person who thinks, 'Oh, I should have done that.' I wouldn't be where I am today.

"My dad always said to me: 'I wish you enough,' " she continues. "When I was young, I would say, 'No, I don't want to have enough! I want more!' Now I understand. It's learning to be content. Live with an open hand, not a tight fist." ■

Los Angeles-based writer Rebecca Sun, a former senior editor at The Hollywood Reporter, *was, in 2023, the inaugural recipient of the Coalition of Asian Pacifics in Entertainment's Trailblazer Award.*

Where to Go in 2025

We scoured the globe for the best travel destinations for older Americans. Whether you're into history, nature, relaxation or getting the most for your money, these are the places to be in the coming year. **By Ken Budd**

Main photo: Sasha Israel

BOSTON

Boston Public Garden

WHY GO

To relive the spirit of ’75

IN ANOTHER YEAR, we’ll all be celebrating the nation’s semiquincentennial. What’s that? The 250th anniversary of the 1776 signing of the Declaration of Independence. But lest we forget, the Revolutionary War’s first shots were fired in 1775. And that 250th anniversary warrants a trip to Boston this year.

DON’T MISS

The historic charm of the Charlestown neighborhood.

Start with a reenactment of Paul Revere’s ride on April 18 at the Hancock-Clarke House in Lexington, about 15 miles northwest of Boston. On April 19, the towns of Lexington and Concord will host reenactments and parades. (Stop by the Concord Museum to see one of the lanterns that hung in Old North Church and indicated “two if by sea.”) The spirit of ’75 festivities continue in mid-June with the anniversary of the Battle of Bunker Hill in Boston’s Charlestown neighborhood. Commemorations will include a parade and remembrance events. Leave time to wander the cobblestone streets and drink a Sam Adams at the Warren Tavern, built in 1780 after the British torched Charlestown, and visited by George Washington and Paul Revere.

Bunker Hill reenactors

Bunker Hill Monument

Amid the revelry, it’s also a good time to remember the sacrifices of our American predecessors, as thousands of troops died in the Revolution. “It’s mind-boggling,” says Boston historian and tour guide Charles Bahne. “This is where these people stood, they made a stand, and they gave birth to our nation.”

LONDON

WHY GO

The 80th anniversary of V-E Day

IN LONDON’S 2,000-year history, Victory in Europe Day (V-E Day) ranks as the city’s biggest bash. On May 7, 1945, news broke of the end of World War II hostilities in Europe. The celebrations started immediately.

The 80th anniversary on May 8, 2025, won’t be quite so boisterous, but still special.

DON’T MISS

The French House pub, a gathering place for members of the French resistance.

“V-E Day is one of those occasions where Britain loses its reserve somewhat and parties,” says Paul Gass, 52, who served in the Royal Air Force and now works for the American Red Cross in New Jersey. “Patriotic bunting, union flags, parades, singing wartime songs and dancing to American big band music—the whole day stirs deep-seated pride.”

Start with a visit to Churchill War Rooms, then head to locations where crowds partied in 1945, from Piccadilly Circus to Trafalgar Square. Next, pay your respects at St. Paul’s Cathedral—the Anglican church held 10 straight services attended by thousands on V-E Day—and stroll to Buckingham Palace, where Winston Churchill and the royal family admired the celebrating throngs from the balcony.

Big Ben

From top: Lumiere/eStock; M. Scott Brauer/Redux; Haydon Perrior

FAIRBANKS, ALASKA

A view of the northern lights

WHY GO

Aurora borealis activity may reach its highest levels of visibility in a decade

MANY A WEARY traveler has been disappointed on a trek to view the northern lights. Celestial phenomena can be unpredictable. So you might see dazzling colors in the night sky, or you might just see night sky.

But in 2025, your odds of a sighting are greater than normal. Aurora borealis activity may reach its highest levels since 2014, and Fairbanks is a prime spot for the atmospheric show. The city sits under the "auroral oval," a zone with concentrated activity. And Fairbanks' low precipitation and distance from coastal areas make for consistently clear nights.

How good are the odds? Data suggests about a 90 percent chance of seeing the northern lights over a three-night stay, according to the University of Alaska Fairbanks' Geophysical Institute. Any park or open area works to see the lights, but many visitors mix the frigid nights with a warm environment. At the Chena Hot Springs Resort, about 60 miles northeast of Fairbanks, you can watch the skies while relaxing in hot springs.

Amateur astronomer Todd Thalimer, 53, of Parker, Colorado, made the trek in 2023 and saw the lights four times. "The aurora was dancing like waves, bright green and pink and red. I've seen a lot of stuff in the universe, but that one was really like ... wow."

DON'T MISS

Borealis Basecamp's igloos let you gaze at the sky from bed.

OVERTON PARK SHELL
MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE

WHY GO

To celebrate two kings of music

IN 2025, THIS American music mecca is staging celebrations for two big posthumous birthdays. First up is what would have been Elvis Presley's 90th on January 8. Graceland will mark the occasion with a birthday cake cutting outside the mansion on January 8; live music, movies, tours and other events will continue through January 11. September 16 will mark the 100th anniversary of B.B. King's birth. Head to the famous Beale Street, where B.B. King's Blues Club will celebrate on September 18 with a musical tribute featuring members of King's band.

When King arrived from Mississippi in 1946, Beale Street was the vibrant hub of Memphis's Black cultural scene. He quickly

SUN STUDIO CAFE

Sun Studio Cafe

Clockwise from left:Phil Kingsley/Courtesy Borealis Basecamp; Craig Thompson/Courtesy Overland Park Shell; Giovanni Simeone/eStock

landed a radio DJ gig as "The Beale Street Blues Boy" (later shortened to B.B.) and built a fan base playing the guitar in local clubs. These days, tourists swarm Beale Street, including the Rum Boogie Cafe and King's namesake blues club.

Memphis also boasts a number of music sites to visit in homage to both men. You can see Sun Studio, where they each recorded, and check out the Memphis Rock 'n' Soul Museum and the Stax Museum of American Soul Music. But perhaps the best way to celebrate their legacy is by diving into the city's still-thriving music scene. One must-visit spot is the outdoor Overton Park Shell. Built as a Works Progress Administration project in 1936, the amphitheater hosted Elvis' historic debut performance in 1954 (he opened for Slim Whitman) and offers free concerts each year from May through October and a backstage museum experience year-round.

DON'T MISS

The Green Room, an under-the-radar intimate venue.

To escape the tourists, head to Bar DKDC (the locals say it stands for "don't know, don't care"). "It's my favorite spot for cool, live music. It gets not just local artists but touring artists that don't mind playing tiny spaces," says Cole Early, Overton Park Shell's content and archives manager and a Memphis music enthusiast and self-described "music fanatic." "It's a well-kept secret. Many Memphians have no clue about it."

Early raves, too, about Crosstown's little-known Memphis Listening Lab, a music library with a collection of 35,000 45-rpm singles, 15,000 LPs and 25,000 CDs. Guests can visit the lab's SoundRoom, make a selection and relax in a comfy chair. "It's the ultimate place for vinyl and music nerds," Early says.

From top: Getty Images; Yadid Levy

Ushuaia, Argentina

WHY GO A favorable exchange rate

WHEN DIPPING INTO your savings account to take an international vacation, one key consideration is affordability. So when weighing where to travel, research the strength of the dollar compared to local currency for more purchasing power.

Argentina is a popular destination that is easy to reach, and it typically has the best exchange rate to the dollar in the Americas, a recent report from NetVoucherCodes found.

But Argentina offers more than inexpensive empanadas. You'll find glaciers, massive mountains and miles of Atlantic coastline.

DON'T MISS

Buenos Aires, known as "the Paris of South America."

CARDEL VIVE

Buenos Aires street musician

Hikers will love Ushuaia, the world's southernmost city, and El Chaltén, a Patagonian town near the Parque Nacional Los Glaciares. Iguazú Falls is part of a World Heritage Site that straddles the border with Brazil. Birders flock to Parque Nacional Iberá to spot more than 300 species, from cuckoos to kingfishers.

Among South America's most-visited cities, Buenos Aires boasts interesting colonial-style architecture and a culture that "combines European heritage with Latin passion," says Camila Otaño, a city tour guide. She recommends a walk in the Palermo Soho and Villa Crespo neighborhoods to see the city's dynamic street art.

Another benefit to Argentina: No "overtourism," says tour guide and travel consultant Verónica Ducrey. Less congestion can make a trip more pleasant for older travelers—and allows more chances to get to know the locals. "We are passionate and outspoken, and we are friendly, welcoming, warm," Ducrey says of porteños, as Buenos Aires residents are called. "You'll make friends on day one in this city and in the whole country."

ORLANDO, FLORIDA

Mario and Luigi are highlights of Super Nintendo World.

Orlando skyline

WHY GO A big new U.S. theme park with multigenerational appeal

WANT TO SAVOR some Gen X nostalgia? The new Universal Epic Universe is set to open in 2025, and one section of the theme park may appeal to you as much as to the younger generation. Cha-ching! It's Super Nintendo World. Ride the Mine-Cart Madness coaster, which recreates the wild rides in the Donkey Kong Country video games, and the kid-friendly Yoshi's Adventure, where you hop on a cartoonish creature and search for glowing eggs.

Then explore the park's other four worlds. Celestial Park is Epic Universe's central hub. How to Train Your Dragon—Isle of Berk is based on the animated film series, and Dark Universe focuses on the studio's classic creatures, from Frankenstein's monster to the Wolf Man. "Monsters are to Universal what princesses are to Disney, so it's amazing that it's taken this long to see a land devoted to this," says Robert Niles, editor of Theme Park Insider. "A lot of people are circling that new land as the one they're most excited about."

DON'T MISS

Mario Kart: Bowser's Challenge, a race like the video game.

The fifth area of the park is the Wizarding World of Harry Potter—Ministry of Magic, where visitors will whoosh from 1920s Paris to 1990s British Ministry via a Métro-Floo (Potter geeks will understand). You'll also see the trial of villain Dolores Umbridge, and when she tries to escape, you'll chase her while riding in omnidirectional lifts and dodging attacks from Death Eaters and other creatures.

GET IN GEAR *These travel products can help ease your trip*

Lightweight backpacks

Some airlines now charge to use the overhead bin. For shorter trips, consider taking a lightweight travel backpack. Many now offer ample space but still fit under the seat.

Underseat personal items

Many luggage companies have developed rolling bags that are small enough to fit under plane seats. Some have removable wheels to ensure they meet airline dimension rules.

Neck pillows

Some newer variations include straps that you can tie to your headrest to prevent your head from bobbing or a flat back that makes it easier to rest the pillow against the seat.

Collapsible water bottles

It's important to stay hydrated when traveling, especially with dry airplane cabin air. Try a collapsible water bottle. Some even include filters for better-quality sips.

—Elise Ceyral

Clockwise from left: Kyle Grillot/Bloomberg/Getty Images; Getty Images; Illustrations by Guilherme Henrique

PROVENCE, FRANCE

Aix-en-Provence, Bouches-du-Rhône, France

WHY GO An emerging hot spot for women seeking out rich experiences

ON A RECENT trip through France, Sacha Cohen saw Loire Valley châteaus. And Parisian art. And something else intriguing: Lots of women like her.

"Midlife women are flocking to the region," says Cohen, a 55-year-old writer from Arlington, Virginia, who blogs about France on her site, A Good Vintage. The appeal isn't just about strolling quaint boulevards and nibbling Brie at cafes. It's about experiencing a society that values women over 50. "The overall appreciation of older women is more apparent to me there than at home."

DON'T MISS Discovering a relaxing spot. This isn't a place for hurried sightseeing.

Older women stride confidently in public spaces, Cohen says, whether they're power walking in parks, biking down cobblestone streets or enjoying "long unapologetic lunches." As one 67-year-old expat told her, sexism and ageism are not as prevalent in France, and older women are considered interesting because they have life experiences. Cohen also appreciates the slower pace of life in France. "There's less focus on work and more on pleasure."

Port of Cassis

Ready to enjoy some indulgent, French-style slowness? Head to Provence and wander the outdoor markets in towns such as Aix-en-Provence and Cassis. Pack a lunch and visit one of the plentiful gardens or parks. "There's nothing better than a picnic al fresco with wine and cheese and watching the world go by," Cohen says. "I think women, as we get older, we're looking for more relaxing, peaceful places to travel that have culture and good food and good wine and art. All of those things come together in a place like Provence." ■

Ken Budd has written for National Geographic Traveler, Travel + Leisure, The Washington Post Magazine *and many other outlets.*

From top: John Kellerman/Alamy; Rocco Ceselin

Movies *for*

And the 2025 nominees are ...

Coleman Domingo

Shōgun

THIS WAS A GOOD YEAR for film and TV by and for people over age 50, those we call "grownups." Nearly half the most recent acting Emmys went to grownups, and there were four times as many grownup Oscar acting nominees this year as there were 30 years ago. It's apt that the 2025 Movies for Grownups Career Achievement Award goes to the still-in-demand Glenn Close, 77, who will accept the honor at this year's Movies for Grownups Awards at the Beverly Wilshire, a Four Seasons Hotel, on January 11 (to be televised by *Great Performances* on February 23, 2025, on PBS). For more on Close, see page 47. Here are this year's nominees in the top categories. *—Tim Appelo, chief AARP film and television critic*

Film Nominations

Best Picture

- ***Conclave*** Thrillers don't come any smarter than *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* screenwriter Peter Straughan's adaptation of Thomas Harris' book about a ruthless game of thrones when the Pope dies and the Vatican authorities choose a successor.
- ***Emilia Pérez*** A lawyer (Zoe Saldaña) helps a cartel kingpin find a new life, a new name—and a new gender. Critic Bilge Ebiri called it "a cross between *Mrs. Doubtfire* and *Sicario*."
- ***Gladiator II*** The sequel to the 2001 best picture Oscar winner features Denzel Washington, 69, as a rich man who supplies gory Roman games with gladiators.
- ***September 5*** Steven Spielberg's 2005 *Munich* dramatized the hunt for the

Photo credits on page 71

Grownups

Thelma

A Complete Unknown

terrorists who struck the 1972 Munich Olympics, but this pulse-pounder directed by Tim Fehlbaum puts you in the minds of the ABC Sports crew that had to show it to the world.

- ***A Complete Unknown*** Timothée Chalamet plays the young Bob Dylan going electric, in a film that will electrify some fans and outrage others—but once upon a time, he looked so fine, didn't he?

Best Director

- **Jacques Audiard, 72, *Emilia Pérez*** Who else had the audacity to make a musical that's also a soap opera that's also a tense crime drama?
- **Edward Berger, 54, *Conclave*** The director of the World War I epic *All Quiet on the Western Front* depicts a more secret battlefield: the inner sanctum of the Vatican.
- **Ridley Scott, 87, *Gladiator II*** The four-time Oscar-nominated director of *Blade Runner* is still slaying the competition in the Colosseum that is Hollywood.

AWARDS SHOW HOST ALAN CUMMING

AT 59, CUMMING IS an ever-rising star who's won Emmys, plus Olivier, BAFTA, Independent Spirit and British Comedy awards; received four honorary doctorates; and wrote a *New York Times* No. 1 bestseller. He's been dazzling on stage and screen; you won't want to miss his witty show-tune spoofs at the *Movies for Grownups Awards*.

- **Pedro Almodóvar, 75, *The Room Next Door*** In the Spanish master's first feature film in English, old friends (Julianne Moore and Tilda Swinton, both 64) reunite after one is diagnosed with terminal cancer.
- **James Mangold, 60, *A Complete Unknown*** He immortalized Johnny Cash in *Walk the Line*, and now he has brought back the young Bob Dylan, along with the 1960s folk scene.

Best Actor

- **Colman Domingo, 55, *Sing Sing*** Acting opposite actual ex-convicts, Domingo plays a prisoner who joins a theater group that turns troubled lives around through drama.
- **Ralph Fiennes, 61, *Conclave*** Fiennes takes us into the soul of a man painfully interrogating his flawed fellow clergymen, and his own faith.
- **Daniel Craig, 56, *Queer*** In a psychedelic adaptation of William Burroughs'

Conclave

Palm Royale

autobiographical novel, the James Bond star plays a war vet who whisks his lover from Mexico to South America in search of a magic tea to enable him to read the guy's mind and see if he cares about him.

- **Jude Law, 51, *The Order*** Law plays an FBI agent hunting a terrifying neo-Nazi gang in the remote Pacific Northwest. The story is ripped from real 1980s headlines.
- **Adrien Brody, 51, *The Brutalist*** His visionary architect character, a Holocaust survivor who makes his masterpiece in Pennsylvania, is haunted by the American Dream.

Best Actress

- **Demi Moore, 62, *The Substance*** She daringly plays an actress who takes a youth potion with horrific consequences (and biting commentary about ageism).
- **Marianne Jean-Baptiste, 57, *Hard Truths*** An Oscar nominee (*Secrets & Lies*, 1996), she plays a human tornado who vents her rage on everyone in her path, and her performance makes us feel where all that anger's coming from.
- **June Squibb, 95, *Thelma*** At 84, she got an Oscar nomination for *Nebraska*. Now she aces her first lead role, as a phone-scam victim who—inspired by Tom Cruise in *Mission: Impossible*—pursues the criminal. And she did her own stunts!
- **Nicole Kidman, 57, *Babygirl*** Kidman nails the role of a CEO who risks all for a sizzling fling with a 20-something intern (Harris Dickinson).
- **Pamela Anderson, 57, *The Last Showgirl*** The *Baywatch* veteran is seriously good as a Las Vegas dancer in hard times, defiantly shouting, "I'm 57, and I'm beautiful, you son of a bitch!" The Toronto International Film Festival audience went wild.

Best TV Series or Limited Series

- ***Shōgun*** The Emmy-hogging show about the 16th-century ruler who united Japan is a win for Hiroyuki Sanada, 64, its coproducer and titular star. He used to be known as the Tom Cruise of Japan. Now he's the hottest new talent in Hollywood.
- ***Hacks*** Jean Smart, 73, kept her hit show fresh by reaching deeper into her stand-up comic character's intergenerational love-hate relationship with her protégée (Hannah Einbinder).

- ***The Crown*** In the royal drama's finale, Diana (Elizabeth Debicki) and Princess Margaret (Leslie Manville, 68) die, a melancholy, moving conclusion.

- ***Slow Horses*** Oscar winner Gary Oldman, 66, and Oscar nominees Kristin Scott Thomas, 64, and Jonathan Pryce, 77, are superb. Nobody on TV has more fun than Oldman as the slovenly, exuberantly insulting boss of an underdog British spy team.
- ***Palm Royale*** Kristen Wiig, 51, is funny as a 1960s Florida social climber blocked by locals, but Carol Burnett is even better as a grande dame who speaks gibberish, yet makes her feelings known. Her performance made her, at 91, the oldest Emmy comedy actress nominee in history.

MOVIES FOR GROWNUPS CAREER ACHIEVEMENT WINNER GLENN CLOSE →

CLOSE PROVES THAT a Career Achievement winner need not be one gazing back on past glory (which in her case includes scads of major award nominations and wins). She starred in the 2024 Netflix horror hit *The Deliverance* and will be featured in both the upcoming Knives Out mystery *Wake Up Dead Man* and Ryan Murphy's Hulu legal drama *All's Fair*.

Glenn Close

The actress, 77, riffs on growing up in a cult, her path to Hollywood stardom, and finding solace in nature and family • *By Natasha Stoynoff*

★ 2025 ★
Movies *for* Grownups
CAREER ACHIEVEMENT
WINNER

Glenn Close in Belgrade, Montana, September 19, 2024

Wardrobe stylist: Annie Starke; hair stylist: Curtis William Foreman; makeup artist: Melissa Oteri

GLENN CLOSE peers through the windshield of her pickup and surveys a smoky Montana sky. “We’ve got fires all around,” she says as she navigates the road through the haze—past bucolic fields of wheat and quaint schoolhouses—her faithful Havanese dog, Sir Pippin, perched by her side. Even though she is used to a dramatic scene, the actress is stirred by the visuals en route to her plot of land in tiny Belgrade, Montana, nestled between the Bridger Mountains and the winding East Gallatin River. “It reminds me of a poem,” she continues, reciting lines from Yeats—something about gardens, chaos and survival.

Arriving at an isolated homestead with old barns, a weathered granary and a creek running through it, Close, 77, hops out, Pip closely following. Close is petite, but somehow rugged as a farmhand in her faded jeans, plain shirt and vintage-inspired sunglasses. Her cropped silver hair is brushed away from her patrician cheekbones and placid face—a canvas for a multitude of characters audiences have loved and loved to hate over the years.

The actress has been living in nearby Bozeman since 2019 and is now building a second house on this bit of rural paradise. Here, she’s surrounded by family (three of her four siblings and her daughter, Annie, live a stone’s throw away) and far from the madding crowds of Hollywood and

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANDY ANDERSON

> *It's ironic that now, at 77, I'm getting the best roles of my life.*

Manhattan. "I need nature to survive," she sighs, giving Pip a pet. "This is our sanctuary."

It's understandable that she'd gravitate to such a serene haven.

The actress' 50 years in film, television and stage are populated by chilling characters that have kept generations of audiences at the edge of their seats: jilted, rabbit-killing Alex Forrest in *Fatal Attraction* ("I'm not gonna be ignored, Dan!"); villainous 18th-century French noblewoman Marquise Isabelle de Merteuil in *Dangerous Liaisons*; and, recently, the demon-possessed grandma in *The Deliverance*, to name a few.

But she's also known for her sturdy, salt-of-the-earth women—perhaps more like Close herself—who struggle against adversity or oppression, personified by the likes of Midwestern mail-order bride Sarah Wheaton in *Sarah, Plain and Tall*.

They were the kinds of performances that inspired *Vanity Fair* to dub Close "one of the great actresses of our time" and enabled her to accumulate, so far, eight Oscar nominations and a slew of Emmy, Golden Globe and SAG Awards. "I honestly don't think about awards that much," she says, as she hauls a cooler from the back of her truck and swings it onto a wooden picnic table by the creek. She's packed lunch for us—tuna and apple salad with cinnamon donuts. "I feel I've done a good job if my work is resonating with people."

Having said that, she's delighted about her Career Achievement Award, which she'll accept at AARP's upcoming Movies for Grownups Awards, because she, too, gets frustrated when she turns on the TV and can't find something good to watch, something for grownups.

"It's great to accept this award. My sister Jessie and I watched an old movie last night, and God, it was so wonderful. What was it called? Afterwards, we said, 'Boy, they used to make really good movies.'" (She texted the next day with the title: "*My Cousin Vinny*. We laughed *a lot*.")

Hollywood—and for that matter Montana—is a million miles away from Close's origin story. She was born and raised in Greenwich, Connecticut, the daughter of well-known surgeon William T. Close and socialite/philanthropist Bettine Moore Close. Close spent her first seven years roaming the New England countryside, playing pretend with her sister Tina. "We put on puppet shows and made things up. We acted all day long. It just came naturally."

Growing up, she had no problem finding good stuff to watch on TV—like various fairy tales and *The Mickey Mouse Club*. "I felt that I could do whatever any of those kids were doing on film," she says."

At 7, Close's idyllic childhood was upended when her parents joined MRA (Moral Re-Armament)—a movement she now calls a religious cult—and she moved to Switzerland and Africa, before returning to America as a teen to study at Choate Rosemary Hall, an elite Connecticut boarding school. Still, until her early 20s, Close was immersed in the movement—a controlling experience she describes as emotionally harmful. "It made me feel, and I think still feel, like I'm on the outside looking in," she says reflectively.

Her passion for acting helped Close escape MRA's hold. In 1970, she enrolled at the College of William & Mary in Virginia to study acting and anthropology.

"I never thought about acting in movies back then," she says. Broadway beckoned first, but in 1980, when she was starring in the Broadway musical *Barnum* (nabbing her first Tony nomination), she was spotted by the film director

George Roy Hill. He cast Close in *The World According to Garp* (1982) in the role of Jenny Fields (mother of Robin Williams’ Garp) for her film debut. “The hardest thing for me was where to put all my energy,” she says of the transition from theater. “I was used to creating spinning molecules from the stage to the back seats. And you have this bank of energy in your body which would blow out the camera if you had that on film.”

Close-Up
For exclusive video of career achievement winner Glenn Close, see **aarp.org/glennclose.**

She figured it out. Her performance in *Garp* earned Close her first best supporting actress Oscar nod, and her career surged upward. Two of her next three films—*The Big Chill* (1983) and *The Natural*, a 1984 baseball drama costarring Robert Redford—brought two more Oscar nominations for best supporting actress.

Three years later, Close’s terrifying turn in *Fatal Attraction* (1987) not only “scared the shit out of men” everywhere, as she puts it, but also brought her first best actress Oscar nomination. Over the next three decades she would go on to deliver startlingly good performances in film and on television in *Damages, Albert Nobbs* and *Hillbilly Elegy*. Three Emmys and four more Oscar nominations followed.

She has still not won an Oscar. She says it’s no big deal. “I’d much rather be in the room again and again rather than win it once and never show up again,” she says. “The honor is to be with the people who are making the work that our audiences feel is worthy.”

MEANWHILE HER personal life has ebbed and flowed. She has been married three times and became a mother, at 41, to her daughter, Annie, in 1988. (Dad is film producer John Starke.) “I weaned Annie at 7 weeks old when I went to film *Dangerous Liaisons*,” Close recalls. “She grew up on movie sets and onstage, in dressing rooms and theaters. She was always near people who loved her.” Now 36, Annie hosts her own cooking show, *The Mountain Kitchen*, and costarred with Close in *The Wife* in 2017.

Close has revealed that she suffers from depression occasionally, and in 2010—after her sister Jessie was diagnosed with bipolar disorder and her nephew with schizoaffective disorder—she cofounded a nonprofit, Bring Change to Mind, to help destigmatize mental illness. “People are more aware of the importance of mental health,” she says, “but we still don’t have the institutions to help people get better and then stay well.”

While Close has gathered her family in Montana, she also believes in giving people, including herself, space. After her marriages and several long-term partners, she’s currently single, and that’s just fine. “Katharine Hepburn said something like, ‘Men and women should live next to each other and visit every now and then,’ ” she says with a laugh.

THROUGHOUT HER CAREER, Close has wanted to please audiences ... and sometimes startle them. The buzz in the news the day we chat is her latest role as a Satan-fighting grandma in the horror flick *The Deliverance*, and a nasty line she spits out while thrashing about, demonically possessed.

“It shocked everyone?” she asks of her character’s reference to a female body part. “I’m glad!”

But Close’s gaze is already on the horizon, specifically on her upcoming film role as Norma Desmond in *Sunset Boulevard*. She first played the tragic, once famous, now-fading actress on Broadway 30 years ago, and won a Tony. “Norma Desmond is like Hamlet,” says Close, “one of the greatest roles ever written for a woman.”

Unlike Desmond, though, Close has no intention of fading away. “It’s ironic that now, at 77, I’m getting the best roles of my life,” she says. “I’m having the time of my life.”

Our picnic at an end, Close scans the clearing sky and the land and mountains before her. She points to three twisted apple trees dotted with red.“I call them the Sisters,” she says. “They were planted by the first homesteaders here in the late 1800s. They still bear fruit, which is a miracle, because they’ve been ravaged by bears over the years and are practically hollow.”

Gardens, chaos and survival.

The actress tosses Pip half of her uneaten donut, excuses herself and disappears into a weather-beaten barn.

She’s got chores to do before sundown. ■

Natasha Stoynoff is an award-winning journalist and New York Times *best-selling coauthor of 15 books who frequently writes about celebrities and culture for* AARP The Magazine. *On staff at* People *magazine for a dozen years, she has freelanced for* The Washington Post, USA Today *and* Time.

ICONIC CLOSE FILMS

THE BIG CHILL *(1983)* Close nabbed her second Oscar nod for anchoring a murderers’ row ensemble cast in this bittersweet boomer classic.

FATAL ATTRACTION *(1987)* The bunny-boiling other woman, Close’s Alex Forrest seduces a married man (Michael Douglas) and becomes the subject of 1,001 op-ed pieces about ’80s feminism.

101 DALMATIANS *(1996)* As the cackling Cruella de Vil, Close tap-dances the fine line between comedy and camp—breeding spotted puppies for their fur.

THE WIFE *(2017)* Close earned the seventh of her eight unrequited Oscar noms for this slow-simmering drama about the overlooked spouse of a Nobel Prize–winning novelist (Jonathan Pryce) whose work she deserves more than a little credit for.

—Chris Nashawaty

Photofest (2)

“My family doesn’t say we moved on. We say we moved forward. Because none of us wants to forget what we all went through.”

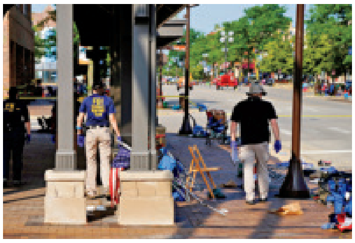
—SHEILA GUTMAN
Shot on July 4, 2022

THE SURVIVORS

America has become so accustomed to mass shootings that we've developed a routine. There's the shock, the horror, the memorials, the grief. But for those who survive such horrific attacks, little about life is routine anymore **By Rachael Bale**

IT HAS BEEN five years since the El Paso Walmart shooting. Fifteen years since the Fort Hood shooting. And 25 years since what we now simply call "Columbine." By one conservative estimate, nearly 1,000 people were killed in mass shootings in the U.S. between 1997 and 2022—and those shootings have become more frequent and deadly every year. Some locations are chosen seemingly at random, while others are the twisted fruit of age-old prejudices.

Shooters often use semiautomatic rifles that fire large, high-velocity bullets, which can cause a shock wave with explosive-like effects. Though not fully automatic like their military-grade counterparts, such guns chamber a new cartridge after each pull of the trigger, allowing them to shoot with fatal efficiency.



The aftermath of the attack on a parade in Highland Park, Illinois, where Gutman was injured

Cheney Orr/Reuters

For those who lose family members in a shooting, the shock and sorrow are unending. Often overlooked in the conversation about these horrific events are the people who were present at a shooting but didn't die. Who are these "lucky" ones? Those who were shot in the foot, the belly, the back—or were not shot at all but are still haunted? The ones who made it through because the paramedics reached them in time, or because they happened to be near a hiding place, or because the shooter simply turned their gun toward someone else?

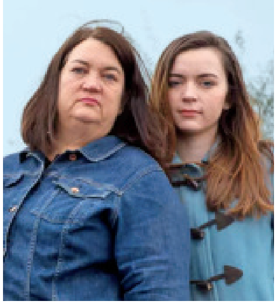
People who survive mass shootings often face lifelong medical and psychological challenges—and, many of them say, experience unexpected personal growth. AARP spoke to 10 older survivors of some of the most notorious shootings of the past 15 years to learn what happens after the cameras turn away.

PHOTOGRAPH BY TIM KLEIN

Mary Reed, 66

Retiree in Tucson, Arizona

Date of shooting: January 8, 2011



Outside a Safeway, Reed, her husband and their two teenagers were attending a meet-and-greet with then-Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords when a gunman opened fire. Reed threw her daughter against a concrete wall and shielded the teen with her own body. Reed was shot in both arms and her back. Her daughter was uninjured. By the time bystanders tackled the shooter, six people had been killed and another 13, including Reed and Giffords, were wounded.

MARY REED'S family has always owned guns. "I was raised in Texas, where they don't let you graduate high school if you can't walk in 3-inch heels and field strip a sidearm," she jokes. But in her household, guns were for shooting targets. Gun violence wasn't something she thought about much.

Now that she has a bullet embedded next to her spine, she thinks about it all the time. Three surgeons have recommended against removing the bullet, because it's located within a bundle of nerves that, if disturbed, could affect bowel and bladder control and diminish the feeling in her right leg.

The bullet makes its presence known. About twice a month, it causes a searing pain that wraps around Reed's torso like a rope; she likens the sensation to a combination of fire ants and sciatica. The pain can be brought on by the smallest things, she says. "Once, I was walking with hot coffee, and I sneezed," she recalls. In trying not to spill the coffee, she tweaked her back. Out and around wrapped the rope of fire ants. The only thing to do was take a muscle relaxer and go to bed. Another time, Reed was doing Pilates, and seemingly out of nowhere, she vomited. That's when she learned it was possible to aggravate the injury so that it sets off involuntary bodily processes.

While that bullet isn't going anywhere, a surgeon did remove the bullet in her left arm. It was promptly signed over to a sheriff's officer. (As a gunshot victim, "you're like an evidence locker," she says.) Unexploded gunpowder embedded in the skin of her right arm—a consequence of being shot at close range—was removed by a dermatologist, who used a laser to essentially blow up the powder, a treatment that "stung like bees and hornets," Reed recalls. Even today, there are tiny crumbles of concrete working their way out of the skin on that arm, driven in when a bullet grazed it and hit the concrete wall. ("If something itches, I scratch it, and there's this little piece of concrete," she says.)

Reed now advocates for gun safety legislation and volunteers to help other survivors. She believes that many Americans don't know what to say to gun violence survivors.

"We need updated manners for mass shootings," Reed says. People want to connect but are often at a loss. At school pickup not long after she was injured, another parent asked Reed, "Why did you take your kids to a shooting?"

But while some of the comments "would leave your jaw on the ground," she says, "I know the words are coming from a place of love."

So if someone you know has been affected by a mass shooting, what should you say to them?

She pauses. "Just say, 'I'm so sorry.'"

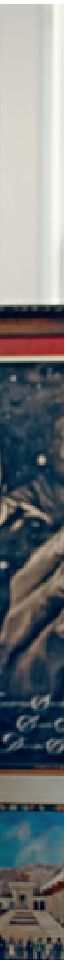
Polly Sheppard, 80

Retired nurse in Florence, South Carolina

Date of shooting: June 17, 2015

Wednesday evening Bible study at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston was just ending, and the dozen parishioners in the basement of the 200-year-old church had closed their eyes for the final prayer. The 13th person in the room, a newcomer who had participated in the group's discussion, then pulled out a gun and started shooting. Nine people were killed, and two others, who were uninjured, feigned death. When the gunman approached Sheppard, sheltering beneath a table, she met his eye. "Did I shoot you yet?" he asked her. "No," she replied. "I'm not going to," he said. "I'm going to leave you here to tell the story." The self-declared white supremacist fled and was later arrested during a traffic stop.

From top: StoryCorps/NPR; Will Crooks



Saul Loeb/AFP/Getty Images

FOR SEVERAL months after the shooting, Polly Sheppard was angry. It was a feeling she didn't understand. "Why are you so angry?" she asked herself. Then she realized: "Because God left you here. You didn't have a scratch on you. But you can't be the one to hold all this madness." She knew she had to forgive the shooter; otherwise, she says, "it's like you're drinking poison."

She also knew forgiveness wouldn't be easy. But her 14 years as a nurse at the Charleston County jail had helped her learn to withhold judgment. "You meet people who you think are guilty, but they're not guilty, and you can meet guilty people who are so sweet," she says. "If the person is a murderer, you treat them the same as anybody else."

People have asked her whether she would have been able to provide care for the shooter in jail if the shooting had happened before she retired. "Yes," she says. "I don't think he would enjoy working with me, though."

Sheppard says she has forgiven the shooter, but there is no forgetting. The skittering light of the handgun's laser, the sound of the shooter's boots, the feeling of checking for a friend's pulse and finding none—those memories will be with her for life.

And Sheppard is indeed here to tell the story. She regularly tells it to state senators—one of whose colleagues, the Rev. Clementa Pinckney, died in the shooting—to advocate for a hate crime law in South Carolina, which is one of only two states without one. Sheppard told her story at the 2016 Democratic National Convention, where gun safety was a defining issue. The anti–gun control candidate from the other party won the presidency.

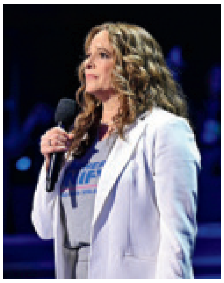
Sheppard admits to getting discouraged sometimes. Being the memory keeper of such a horrific event "is not an easy thing," she says. "You feel like you're out here by yourself."

But those feelings are part of what keeps her going. There are many survivors like her, and Sheppard wants them to know that they are not alone.

Abbey Clements, 56

Teacher and gun safety advocate
Western Connecticut

Date of shooting: December 14, 2012



With gunfire echoing in the halls and boots pounding on the roof of Sandy Hook Elementary School, second grade teacher Clements huddled with her class underneath the coats and backpacks that hung on a classroom wall. She tried to keep the children calm by reading and singing. The gunman didn't make it into her classroom that day but, by the end, 20 children and six adults at the school had been killed before the shooter turned the gun on himself.

THE WORDS flow easily when Abbey Clements talks about working to include teachers' voices in the public conversation about gun violence. But telling her own story? "That's the part that's hard," she says.

Twelve years have passed since the shooting. "The depth of survivor grief is immense," Clements says. "I choose to talk about what happened because the public tends to move on from these tragedies, and those who experience them, or love someone who has, don't have that luxury."

Layered on top of that is guilt. "You survived something because a shooter turned left instead of right. What do you do with that?"

Clements experiences some of the effects of trauma: the hypervigilance, the flood of panic and flush of heat in a crowd, the racing heart when she feels trapped, like in the dentist's chair. "It just sneaks up on me," she says.

She says she has been sustained by friendships with other survivors, including teachers who survived the 1999 Columbine High School shooting. Therapy also helped. Especially effective, she says, was eye movement desensitization and reprocessing therapy (EMDR), which uses bilateral brain stimulation—usually side-to-side eye movements and taps on the arms and legs—to change the way a traumatic memory is stored in the brain.

About six months after the shooting, Clements' teenage daughter invited her to a meeting of gun violence prevention activists. As soon as she got to the meeting, she knew "immediately that these were my people," she says. "My place was around other survivors and activists who wanted to make change."

Almost three years ago, Clements and two fellow educators founded the nonprofit Teachers Unify to End Gun Violence, to give a voice to educators and school staff, both current and retired, within the discussion about curbing school shootings.

She still feels flashes of guilt for surviving, and even for having resources that she knows other survivors of gun violence don't. These flashes of guilt are a reminder of the indelible mark a mass shooting leaves on the brain, bullet wound or not.

Jennifer Bennett, 68

Retired civilian worker for the U.S. Navy
Springfield, Virginia

Date of shooting: September 16, 2013

When the fire alarm went off, Bennett—who was at work at the headquarters of the Naval Sea Systems Command in Washington, D.C.—headed down a stairwell to evacuate. Then, just 10 steps below her, she saw a man with a sawed-off shotgun. They locked eyes. Bennett stood still. Next came a blast, and shotgun pellets tore through her shoulder, arm and hand. Bennett walked back up the stairs, but every door she encountered was locked until she emerged on the roof, where she was picked up by a helicopter that flew her to a hospital. The gunman killed 12 people at the Washington Navy Yard that morning and injured four, including Bennett, before a police officer returned fire and killed him.

JENNIFER BENNETT talks about the aftermath of the Navy Yard shooting in two distinct components, the practical and the intangible.

The practical is this: It has been more than 11 years since the shooting, and she's nowhere near done with medical treatment. Her arm is now attached to her shoulder with a titanium plate and 12 screws. It still hurts, and missing muscle means her spine is subtly but constantly pulling to the left. She schedules regular chiropractor and medical massage treatments so that she's "not just completely racked with pain," Bennett says.

She has long known that she would eventually need another surgery to replace all her hardware, which is wearing out. Despite two bone marrow transplants to regrow the bone that was destroyed where her arm meets her shoulder, there's a small gap that never filled in. That has put extra pressure on the plate and screws. Like a paper clip that has been bent too many times, the plate will eventually snap. Already some of the screws have come loose. Bennett has become adept at painful maneuvers that slot the screws back into place.

Still, she's dreading another surgery, which will take her out of commission for up to two years. By now, Bennett has recovered enough to do most of the things she used to, though at a modified pace. She can do her hair, though not really the back of it. She can lug bags of mulch across her garden, but she tires more easily.

Bennett insists she's not anxious about the medical bills. "I don't worry about anything," she says. "You can't change it. You have to just deal with it." That attitude is largely informed by her Christian faith. No matter how difficult something is, she says, "I know there's a purpose."

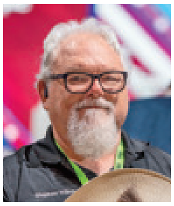
Case in point: Bennett hadn't spoken to her sister in more than a year before the shooting. But when she woke up in the hospital, her sister was there, making sure Bennett's medical team was giving her the best care possible. Whatever disagreement had separated the two sisters from each other didn't matter anymore.

"I can be a hard, hard person," Bennett admits. "But it's no longer important to me whether I'm right or not. My sister is more important to me."

With her new, softer heart, Bennett says, she has come to understand her purpose in life: "to be what God asked me to be, and that is the light. You either present light, so others are uplifted and see their value, or you become darkness."

Stephen Willeford, 62

Active-shooter preparedness trainer and gun rights advocate
Sutherland Springs, Texas



Date of shooting: November 5, 2017

When a masked man opened fire at First Baptist Church on a Sunday morning, Willeford was a block away, relaxing at home. Upon hearing what was unfolding, he raced to his gun safe for his AR-15 and ran to the church. Willeford arrived, yelling, and the masked man came out of the building. The two exchanged fire. A former competitive shooter and gun instructor, Willeford had excellent aim: Six of his shots hit the attacker, including one between the plates of the man's body armor. But the masked man still made it to his car and drove off. Willeford jumped into a truck whose driver had stopped to report the gunfire to 911, and he and the driver gave chase for nearly 12 miles. The attacker's car came to a stop before driving another three-quarters of a mile, then through a fence and into a field. After killing 26 people at the church and wounding 20 more, the attacker killed himself, too.

STEPHEN WILLEFORD grew up on the dairy farm he still calls home. He's the fourth generation of his family to live on the property, where as a boy he carried a gun to chase coyotes away from the livestock and to hunt rabbits and quail. He remembers bouncing on the limb of an old oak tree as his great-grandfather told him stories.

Before the shooting, Willeford had been a plumber, working a maintenance job at a hospital. After the shooting, he remained a plumber—for about eight months. As his crisis counselor told him, his life changed the moment he decided to confront the shooter. He had to get used to a new normal. "But I loved my old normal," he told the counselor. "What's my new normal supposed to be?"

The counselor also prepared Willeford for some unexpected physical effects of trauma. Early on, he recalls, "every time I got really emotional, I lost all control over all my facial muscles on the right side of my face. Had she not told me about this, I would have been panicking." Once, when meeting with people who'd lost loved ones in the shooting, he says, "my right knee started buckling, and the whole right side of my face started into tremors. I told the lady I was talking to, 'I'm really sorry this is happening. They said it might, because of the adrenaline dump.' And she hugged me and said, 'That's what's happening to me, and that explains a lot.' "

Over time, those symptoms resolved, and Willeford's life has become one he never imagined. As a spokesman for Gun Owners of America, he talks to

From top: Evelyn Hockstein; Sipa USA/Alamy lawmakers and large crowds about gun rights. He travels the country training churches on how to respond if a gunman ever breaches the sanctuary.

At home, he tells his own grandchildren stories as they bounce on the limbs of the old oak tree. “Not many people are that blessed,” he says.

That’s what motivates Willeford’s activism now. “I would like to leave my grandchildren the same nation that I grew up in, with the same freedoms and the same environment,” he says.

Despite the effects of the trauma, “I would do it all again,” Willeford says, “because I believe I saved lives.” Along the way, he changed his own. “It has enriched my life. I see God more in everything I do now.”

Lloyd Gock, 71

Small business owner
Los Angeles County

Date of shooting: January 21, 2023

People were dancing and celebrating the Lunar New Year, less than two hours away, at Star Ballroom Dance Studio in Los Angeles County, when a gunman with a pistol and a high-capacity magazine opened fire. Gock and his dance partner took cover beneath a table, unharmed, as they were forced to watch their friends and fellow dancers fall around them. Eleven people died and nine were injured in the attack. The shooter fled the scene and later took his own life.

AFTER THE shooting, Lloyd Gock knew he had to get back on the dance floor. Going dancing felt risky, but not going felt riskier. A few years earlier, Gock had endured a deep depression, and a new passion for social dancing had helped rescue him. So it was the best way he knew to handle the shock of the shooting.

“If I were to isolate myself inside the house, I could easily go back into the depression,” he explains. “I was more worried about that than about being where the shooting happened.”

Still, when he and a handful of other dancers ventured out to a different dance hall just two weeks after the shooting, he kept away from the door.

Returning to work was much harder. Too traumatized to deal with production delays in his clothing manufacturing and importing business, he lost a $200,000 order. He also felt that the challenges that he and other uninjured survivors were facing was going unnoticed in the understandable outpouring of grief over those who had been injured or killed. That’s why he started a campaign to get compensation for almost 40 uninjured survivors of the shooting. It’s not uncommon for survivors to lose business, like Gock, or to have to take unpaid leave while they process the trauma. But in addition, feeling seen and validated is an important part of psychological healing. Eventually, Gock did win some modest compensation from a charitable fund for survivors of the shooting—enough to feel acknowledged.

Like Gock, who emigrated from Hong Kong as a teenager in the 1970s, the majority of Star Ballroom survivors are older Asian immigrants. Many initially were reluctant to seek psychological help due to stigma or a sense that talking about a traumatic experience creates a burden for others to carry. Language also posed a barrier: Many didn’t know of Mandarin- and Cantonese-speaking trauma therapists, and the daunting U.S. health insurance system further discouraged some survivors from getting help.

But when Gock found himself sleeping with the lights on after the shooting because he was afraid of the dark, he knew he needed to talk about it. A piece of wisdom he had learned four decades earlier at a 12-step program for alcoholics came back to him: “To help yourself, you must help others.”

So he helped organize a monthly peer support group for survivors who, like him, weren’t physically injured but were suffering mental trauma. “Having the group and being able to help other people helped my own recovery,” he says.

On the one-year anniversary of the shooting, Gock and other survivors gathered to celebrate what he calls their new “birthday,” the day they got a second chance at life.

David Butow

"I told my group that we are going to have a party," he recalls. "We're going to dance. We're going to eat. We're going to enjoy."

On January 21, 2024, 150 people gathered at a restaurant in Alhambra. Someone queued up "A Light Rain in March," the same song that was playing the moment the shooter burst in. The survivors stood up and danced.

Dan Leger, 76

Retired hospital chaplain and nurse
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Date of shooting: October 27, 2018

Leger had been setting out books for his congregation's Torah study when he heard the first shots. It was a Saturday morning—Shabbat—so he wasn't carrying a phone. Leger and his friend Jerry Rabinowitz, a doctor, rushed toward the sound of gunfire to try to help. Both were shot. Leger, wounded in the hip and abdomen, lay bleeding in a stairwell for 45 minutes before he heard footsteps approaching again. This is one of two people, *he remembers thinking.* It's either someone to help me or it's the person who shot me, coming to finish the job. *Realizing he had nothing to lose, Leger reached out and grabbed the pants leg of the person passing by. It was a paramedic, coming to aid the wounded even before police had arrested the shooter. Five others were injured in the attack, and 11, including Rabinowitz, were killed.*

A HOSPICE nurse for many years, Dan Leger is not unfamiliar with death. That's why, as he lay bleeding on the stairs, he made his viddui, his deathbed confession.

"I didn't feel panicked or frightened," he says. "I was really reviewing my life and just appreciating the wonderful life I've had, the wonderful friends I've had."

In the hospital, Leger hovered at the edge of death for several days. He doesn't know how much blood he lost or how many surgeries he had to repair his bladder, remove a section of his intestines and stabilize his hip—likely five or six operations, he thinks, plus several painful debridements of his wounds to help them heal.

Heading home after two months in the hospital, Leger faced a long convalescence. There would be months more with a urinary catheter; he'll likely have a colostomy bag for the rest of his life. It would be nearly half a year before he started feeling comfortable walking again, even with a cane. And while he doesn't use a cane regularly, Leger says that six years after the shooting, "I no longer feel as comfortable walking as I did before all this. My balance isn't as good. My strength certainly isn't as good."

A conscientious objector during the Vietnam War, Leger worked for more than 40 years in nursing, including 10 years in pediatric hospice and four years as a chaplain in palliative care, a job he had to retire from after the shooting due to disability. That work, and his Jewish faith, he says, is what motivated him during his recovery.

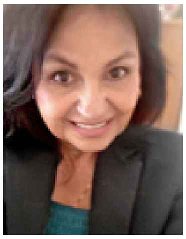
One of Leger's mantras is something his friend Rabinowitz would say: "It's better to be kind than to be right." Leger says he believes that now more than ever.

"I know that there's plenty wrong in the world, but I think I'm hopeful," he adds. "I think that people are inherently good."

Norma Valenzuela, 61

Housekeeping worker
El Paso, Texas

Date of shooting:
August 3, 2019



Valenzuela and her adult daughter had been in Walmart for no more than 10 minutes when the commotion began. Valenzuela was knocked to the ground as screaming people ran past her, away from a gunman shooting a semiautomatic rifle. Her daughter pulled Valenzuela to her feet, and the two of them began running too. Just behind them, a young woman was shot in the leg. Outside, it was 90 degrees, and Valenzuela and her daughter hid with others inside a shipping container that neared a deadly level of heat. Outside the shopping center, police apprehended the gunman, who had killed 23 people and injured 22.

NORMA VALENZUELA has never been back to that Walmart. It was two years before she would go back to any Walmart. Even when she does go, she feels jumpy, she says. "I suddenly start observing people—if they have a backpack, if they put their hands in their pants."

Since trips to big-box stores are inevitable, Valenzuela has developed a routine to help her stay calm when she shops. "I look for where I'll hide," she says. "Once I have a place to hide, I relax."

Years ago, Valenzuela had moved her family to El Paso from Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, then considered the most violent city in the world due to drug cartels. "I came here for shelter, and then this happened," she says.

Although she was physically uninjured, moving forward with her life has taken work. The early days were "terrible," she says, "a lot of anguish, a lot of crying, fear, staying inside." Valenzuela couldn't stop ruminating, analyzing what happened, realizing how close she and her daughter had

From left: Andrew Rush/Pittsburgh Post-Gazette/AP; Courtesy Norma Valanzuela

Tim Klein

come to disaster, how many others were not as lucky.

Antianxiety medication and talk therapy have helped, she says. But the most valuable tool she has found is meditation—guided more by YouTube than by books, she says, because she's found it hard to concentrate on reading since the shooting.

Three or four times a week, when Valenzuela finds herself stuck in a cycle of negative thoughts, she turns to Andrea at Escuela de Amor y Superación Personal, the School of Love and Self Improvement, a YouTube channel that has nearly 1.8 million subscribers. Meditation is "just so beautiful that I don't know how to explain it," she says.

Valenzuela loves music, especially boleros, but an invitation to a concert can send her into a spiral of self-doubt. She'll agree to go, then start questioning herself as soon as she hangs up the phone. "I'll think, *I just don't want to go. But how do I tell them?*"

This back-and-forth is part of being a survivor, she says. Since the shooting, Valenzuela finds more fear in everyday situations, but also more beauty in everyday objects. She worries more, yet says she's also more attuned to the needs of others. Both scared and grateful, she says she will not give up.

Sheila Gutman, 65

Retired attorney
Highland Park, Illinois

Date of shooting: July 4, 2022

At their town's annual Independence Day parade, Gutman, her husband, their three sons and their families were part of the crowd celebrating the day and admiring the patriotic floats. Then a gunman on the rooftop across the street fired into the crowd, killing seven people and injuring 48. Gutman's left foot was pulverized by a bullet. The shooter fled the scene and was later apprehended by police.

JUST OVER A year after the shooting, Sheila Gutman celebrated her birthday by buying gifts for her four adult children and their partners: Each received a pair of New Balance sneakers. "I said to all of them, 'I want you all to put on new shoes as we walk forward into a new place and put the shooting behind us,'" she says.

Gutman herself couldn't wear the shoes—her foot was still too disfigured—but she wanted her family to know that she was doing OK. The bullet had shredded her Achilles tendon, shattered her heel bone and destroyed most of the tissue in the back of her left foot and part of her calf. Early on, amputation looked likely, especially once her foot began turning black after the first reconstructive surgery. The kind of operation that could potentially save her foot required perfect compliance with a complex and lengthy aftercare regimen, which many gunshot survivors are not in a position to complete. If the regimen is not followed, the surgery could result in life-threatening complications, eventual amputation or even damage to the person's other leg.

Because of Gutman's resolve and her strong support network, though, doctors decided to give the risky surgery a try. Using a cadaver bone and a flap of skin, fat, muscle and blood vessels from Gutman's good leg, they again rebuilt the back of her left foot. She then spent three weeks flat on her back, leg in the air, with pins protruding from the bone and attached to the external fixator encaging her foot to make sure nothing moved even a little. Another eight surgeries followed, plus 22 treatments in a hyperbaric oxygen chamber to encourage the flap to heal, collagen treatments and physical therapy.

Today Gutman can walk, albeit with a slight limp that pulls her hip forward and causes back pain. She could probably even run if she really needed to, she says. That's why Gutman recently started going to the movies again: She knows she could get away if someone started shooting.

What she dwells on the most, though, isn't her own injury or trauma. It's that the world, even her community, seems to have moved on already. Gutman admits she used to do that, too, when she'd read about mass shootings in the past. "I might've sent a check but never thought about what happens after," she says.

Now she understands that, as a survivor, "you don't want to be forgotten." She's talking not so much about herself, though, as about people like Cooper Roberts, who was paralyzed from the waist down at the parade when a bullet severed his spinal cord. Cooper was 8 years old

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 70)

TOP 7 MEMBER BENEFITS FOR WINTER

Your AARP membership has exciting benefits to help you enjoy your winter fun—making life even more fun and affordable.

1

TRAVEL

Find discounts on flights and vacation packages through the AARP Travel Center Powered by Expedia, plus save on expedited passport services with RushMyPassport.

2

HEALTH & WELLNESS

Stay active and healthy this winter with on-demand classes from *Pilates Anytime* and free resources through AARP Personalized Nutrition.

3 TECH TIPS & TRICKS

Free tips, events and how-to guides through the AARP Technology Resource Center. Plus, save on cell phone plans from Consumer Cellular and AT&T.

4 GAS & AUTO SERVICES

Navigate safely through wintery conditions with tips from the AARP Smart Guide to Car Maintenance, recall and safety ratings tools and safe driving courses through AARP Driver Safety.

5 RESTAURANTS

‘Tis the season for great food. Enjoy local coupons at your favorite spots like Moe’s Southwest Grill, McAlister’s Deli and Auntie Anne’s.

6 FAMILY CAREGIVING

Get the resources you need to help care for loved ones and yourself with AARP Family Caregiving Guides and checklists.

7 MY SAVED BENEFITS

Save your favorite benefits for easy, on-the-go access. Plus, get alerts on nearby discounts with the AARP Now app.

Member Benefits AARP

Explore even more benefits online and download the new and improved AARP Now app for benefits near you.

aarp.org/benefitsme

AARP membership is not required for all benefits. AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that makes available a wide variety of benefits to its members. Some benefits listed are provided by third parties, not by AARP or its affiliates. Some providers pay a royalty fee to AARP for the use of AARP intellectual property. Amounts paid are used for the general purpose of AARP. Some offers are subject to change and may have restrictions or may expire. The offers are current as of 10/4/24. For the most up-to-date information, visit aarp.org/benefitsme. Please contact the provider directly for details.

REAL/PEOPLE

Braxton with, *from left,* Santas Joe Griffin, Maurice James, Warren Keyes, Fabian Williams

Inspiring stories of friends and neighbors, in their own words

INSIDE SHE'S A REAL KICK P. 62
A PIONEER OF FREESTYLE SKIING P. 63
SOME BUY SURPLUS JEEPS. HIM? A SURPLUS OFFSHORE LIGHTHOUSE P. 64

PHOTOGRAPH BY ALEX BOERNER

Ho Ho Hello

Santas for Everybody

When Stafford Braxton met parents who wanted a different kind of holiday photo, he met the challenge

IT'S RISKY TO tell a stranger, "You look like Santa Claus," but I decided to take that risk. This was at Christmastime in 2012, and I was working as a photographer at a mall Santa booth—with a white Santa, as usual—when I glimpsed the kind of person I'd been looking for. He was African American, like me, with a white beard and a Santa-like physique. I ran off the set, approached the man and told him about the business idea I'd had.

As a photographer, I'd often had parents of color approach me during the holidays to ask whether we ever had a Black Santa. So I decided to start a Black Santa agency. I gave my business card to the Santa prospect and asked him to call me if he was interested, but I never heard from him. Then, five months later, I ran into him again—and he still had my card in his wallet.

That was Warren Keyes, who became my first Santa. We're still working together, though I've got seven Santas now—and I'm always looking for more. We do photo sessions at community and cultural centers and department stores in North Carolina, Virginia, Florida and California.

In some ways, our service is more for the parents than the children. These parents may have grown up without seeing themselves represented in popular Christmas shows and films. They just want their children to feel like they belong.

I remember one event at a church in Charlotte where I met a woman whose daughter and granddaughter had come to see us earlier that morning. When the grandma saw their pictures, she'd made a beeline for the church.

There were tears in her eyes. She told us that she was 72 years old and had never seen a Black Santa in person. She wanted her photo taken with him. By that point, I was crying. The Santa was trying to keep from crying. I focused my camera and took the photo. That woman is why we do this. *—As told to Jennifer E. Mabry*

Stafford Braxton, 63, is a photographer in Huntersville, North Carolina, and the owner of the company Santas Just Like Me.

Colón in a Manhattan dance studio and, *inset*, as a Rockette in the mid-1990s

Once a Rockette ...

Dancer Lillian Colón gained wisdom from time on the kick line

BEING AN OLDER dancer can be challenging. A lot of people age out by the time they're 30. When I walked into the audition for *In the Heights* in 2018, I made a beeline for the choreographer, convinced I was in the wrong room. The studio was filled with young dancers. I had thought the choreographer was going to give the more seasoned dancer a break, but that was not the case. I had to do the same dance that all of the 20-year-olds did. But I went through with the audition and became the oldest dancer in the movie.

I've always done things on my own schedule. I started working in show business straight out of high school, as a singer, dancer and choreographer. Then at 29, I beat out hundreds of other people for a spot in the Radio City Music Hall Rockettes. I danced with that group, with all its synchronized choreography, until my mid-40s. At 46, I had my daughter and started doing wardrobe. These days, I mainly teach dancing, but I'll always be proud to have been the very first Latina Rockette.

The Rockettes are unique in their need for precision. If one person messes up, it messes up the whole line. The experience taught me a lot about working together. It's a lesson I try to impart to my students: On and off the stage, our lives are deeply intertwined, and we all fare better when we support and care for one another. *—As told to Julie Goldenberg*

Lillian Colón, 70, is a New York City dance teacher and the author of the memoir Lilly: The First Latina Rockette.

Inset Courtesy Lillian Colón

PHOTOGRAPH BY BRYAN DERBALLA

The Dean of the Freestyle Skiers

Wayne Wong helped create a new Olympic sport–and more than 50 years later, he's still refining it

PART OF BEING an innovator is showing up at the right time. When I first started skiing, downhill racers were the stars of the ski industry. Then suddenly, in the late 1960s, all these radical, rebellious, unorthodox guys started doing what came to be called "freestyle": catching air by skiing the moguls or doing big aerial jumps. You didn't have to be an elite Alpine skier to do some of these tricks. It was a new way to express yourself on the snow. And I was all in. I started inventing my own moves and showing them off.

At the first national championships of exhibition skiing in New Hampshire in 1971, I took third place. The following year, I took first and was named "Freestyle Skier of the Year" by *Skiing* magazine. It's a legacy that I'm still working to live up to. Maybe I can't do it like I did when I was 20, but I feel like I'm still skiing like I did when I was 40. I'm very fortunate that way. And I work on my fitness—that's a big part of it.

Freestyle skiing is creative, interpretive. We experiment with dance and gymnastic-like movements. It's a lot more than just getting from point A at the top of the mountain to point B at the bottom.

Being inducted into the U.S. and Canadian ski halls of fame was an amazing honor. But to me, the coolest thing—which just blows my mind—is that I got hired by Deer Valley in Park City, Utah, to become their newest sponsored athlete, at 74. Who gets a gig like that?

I act as sort of a goodwill ambassador on the slopes. I help people have fun. A large part of skiing is the companionship, the friendships you make, sharing stories as you're riding the lifts. You have a captive audience to share laughter, to share fun times.

But it's not all social. Every time I get out on the hill, I challenge myself. I try to do things a little better than I did the day before. I want to be a better technical skier, a more efficient skier, and pass that on to my peers.

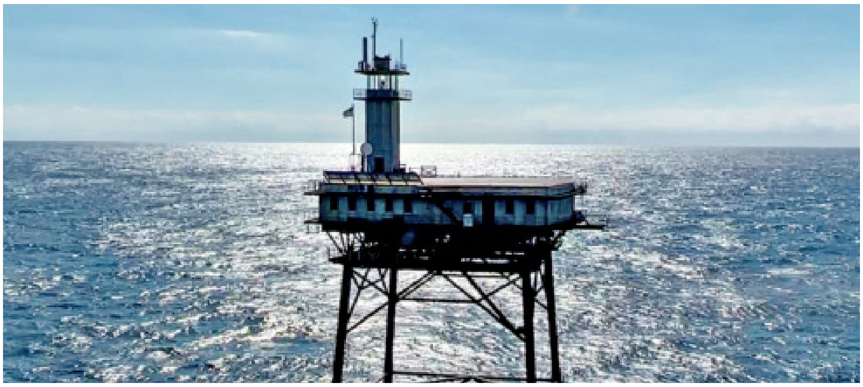
Even as you get older, you can always improve. That's the mystique of skiing. I would encourage people, when they're on the hill, to look for that little spark of inspiration, that impetus to try something new. Experience the mountain, experience the snow, experience the terrain, because skiing is all about feelings.

Salt Lake City was chosen as the site of the 2034 Winter Olympics, and Deer Valley will be the venue for the freestyle events. My goal now is to stay active and be part of this whole movement at least through then.

—As told to Brion O'Connor

Wayne Wong, 75, one of Ski *magazine's "Top 100 Skiers of All Time," lives near Reno, Nevada.*

PHOTOGRAPH BY ERIC SCHRAMM



Neal, *below center,* photographs Frying Pan Tower by day, by night and during diving excursions with volunteers.

Life Just Above Sea Level

Richard Neal snagged a real estate bargain and turned it into a calling

AS A BOY, I'd see these ads in the back of magazines saying you could buy a government surplus jeep for a tiny fraction of its original price. That fascinated me. Well, in 2010, I noticed a decommissioned Coast Guard light station 32 miles off the coast of North Carolina being auctioned off. I put in a bid and won the facility, called Frying Pan Tower, for $85,000. My wife and I keep a home onshore, but I come out to the lighthouse often, either by boat or by helicopter. People say, "You know this isn't normal, right?" I say, "It is just my particular version of normal."

I bought the place a month after I turned 50. I was a computer salesman, but I'd done it all by then: banking, insurance. I'd been a chemist, mechanic, plumber, electrician. There was something different about having my own 135-foot tower. Growing up in Oklahoma, everything had been flat, so Mom built me a treehouse to stare at the stars. When I finally got out to the Frying Pan, I realized I had bought a grownup version of my childhood fort. The main level is a furnished 5,000-square-foot living space with a fully equipped kitchen and eight bedrooms. We get power from solar panels, though there are also backup generators.

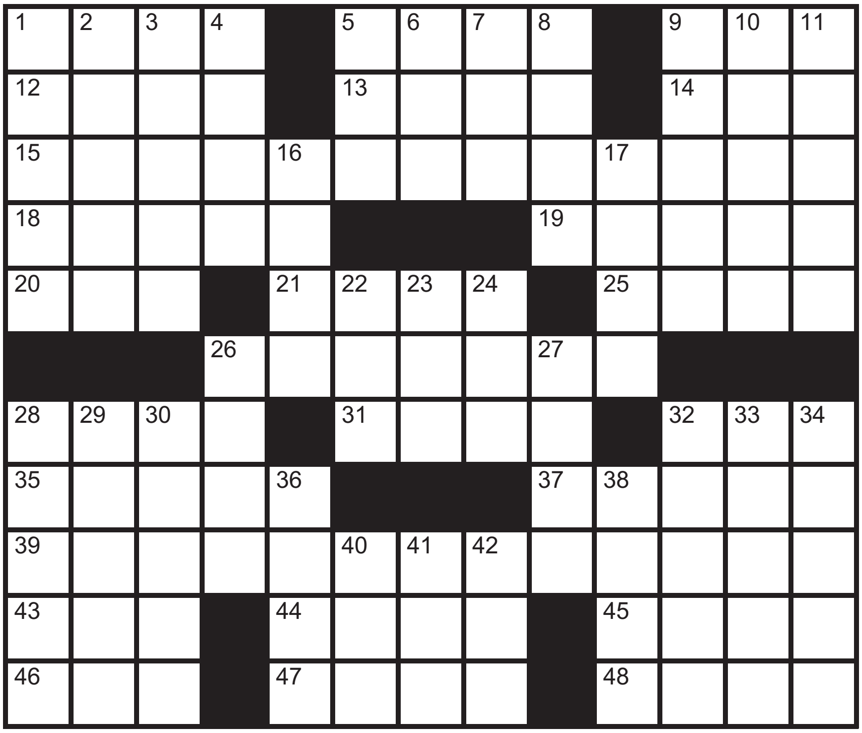
It's certainly never boring out here. In 2014, I rode out Hurricane Arthur with three of our four children here. At times, I've stayed for six months straight. In 2018, I created a foundation and divested all ownership in the property. Now we operate as a nonprofit where ecotourists come out to enjoy the scenery and isolation, and skilled volunteers contribute labor to the ongoing process of restoring the lighthouse. The goal is to protect mariners and sea life and preserve the tower for the next generation. We weld and paint and scrape, but it's not all work. Sometimes we'll scuba dive with tiger sharks, or tee off into the water with "golf balls" made of fish food. We can shoot off fireworks that no American city would allow, since we're beyond U.S. jurisdiction.

When you work a regular job, you think about the hours and the days. But out on the tower, you think in seasons—not just seasons of the year but of your life. Gazing up at the Milky Way or down at the bioluminescent shrimp, it gives you perspective on everything. If there's something you haven't done in life, why wait? You're not going to do it afterward. There is no retirement to life. *—As told to David Hochman*

Richard Neal, 64, a former salesman and appliance installer, is the executive director of the Frying Pan Tower Foundation. He splits his time between Wilmington, North Carolina, and a lighthouse offshore.

Photos courtesy Richard Neal

PUZZLES BY STANLEY NEWMAN



CROSSWORD

Snowy

ACROSS

1 Open-mouth stare
5 Assist in wrongdoing
9 Traffic tie-up
12 Taj Mahal city
13 Sport played on ponies
14 Metallic rock
15 Corn cereal brand
18 Not as many
19 Lenders' legal claims
20 Long, thin fish
21 Corn Belt state
25 WWII turning point
26 "Charlotte's Web" author
28 Top of a mountain
31 Harp-shaped constellation
32 Industrial tub
35 Polite military denial
37 City near the Sphinx
39 Detective's fingerprint revealer
43 Early afternoon hour
44 Fuel for Old West locomotives
45 Grassy fields
46 Streets or avenues: Abbr.
47 Feeling nervous
48 Just average

DOWN

1 Minor mistake
2 See eye to eye
3 Hunt like a lion
4 Make simpler
5 Chimp or gorilla
6 Physique, for short
7 North Pole toymaker
8 Turnpike charge
9 Kidded around
10 Venue for boxing
11 Needing straightening up
16 Chicago newspaper's nickname
17 Personal assistant
22 Big-eyed bird
23 "How come?"
24 Ventilate
26 Freeway off-ramp
27 Crunchy Mexican food
28 Conjunction with a slash
29 British currency
30 Double-curve letters
32 YouTube upload
33 Regions
34 Sculpted upper body
36 Starch in sushi
38 Holemaking tools
40 Head gesture
41 Comedian's one-liner
42 Two-__ paper towels

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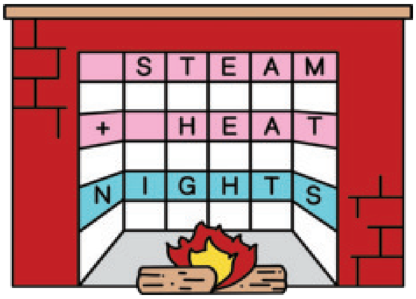
Illustrations by Sam Island

NUMBER FUN

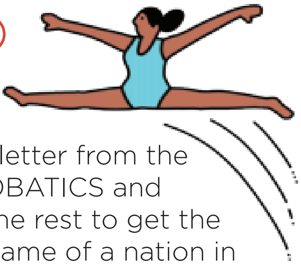
WINTER WARM-UP

Each of the nine letters in the equation represents a different digit. T is three times G, and 4 is not used. What is the solution?

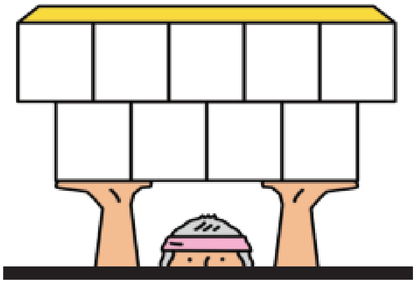

S T E A M
+ H E A T
N I G H T S

WORDPLAY

MENTAL AGILITY



Delete one letter from the word ACROBATICS and rearrange the rest to get the two-word name of a nation in the Western Hemisphere.



THINK!

SAY THAT AGAIN

What four-letter word for a common type of bird, pronounced differently, is also a common past-tense verb?

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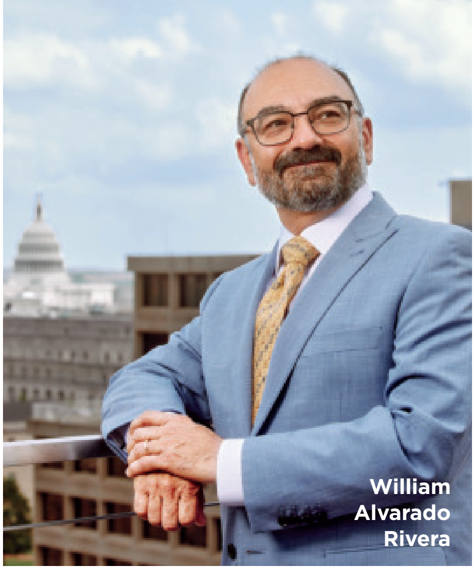
Battling for Justice on Your Behalf

AARP Foundation litigation team defends the rights of older Americans



William Alvarado Rivera

IN 2017, Gloria Single, 82, who had dementia, was sent to the hospital by her nursing home staff after she threw utensils at residents in the dining room. Later, the California facility where she'd lived with her husband for five years refused to allow her back—an action called "patient dumping."

That triggered a yearslong legal battle, in which AARP Foundation lawyers fought to uphold state and federal laws that prohibit what happened to Single. In 2021, a California court ruled her rights were violated, confirming a legal precedent that protects more than a million nursing home residents.

For more than two decades, the AARP Foundation litigation team has taken up legal struggles like Single's in courts around the country. Among the issues tackled in these battles have been age discrimination, workplace bias, nursing home abuses and pension fraud. Through these cases the team has not only helped many individuals, it has shaped aging policy in America.

"We always want our cases to have as broad a reach as possible, both directly and then through deterrence," says William Alvarado Rivera, AARP Foundation senior vice president for litigation.

Foundation lawyers also file briefs as "friends of the court" in cases involving important legal issues affecting people 50 and older. Recent examples include those filed in support of Medicare's ability to negotiate prescription drug prices and in cases aimed at protecting older homeowners from getting their home equity confiscated when they are unable to pay their property taxes.

Over the past five years, the team has taken on a lead role in over 20 cases and filed over 50 amicus briefs.

New challenges lie ahead, like the role AI can play in workplace bias, Rivera says: Some companies are using new AI recruitment tools targeting specific demographics to make it harder for older Americans to find jobs.

But the lawyers at AARP Foundation see their work as both a challenge and a privilege. "It is a unique opportunity to be able to have a law firm within a nonprofit that has a mission as big and bold as ending senior poverty," Rivera says.

For more information, visit **aarpfoundation.org/litigation.**

Recently, the AARP Foundation litigation team has been fighting against:

Age discrimination: Foundation lawyers filed a class action lawsuit on behalf of older workers claiming to have been discriminated against when they applied for a job at RTX Corporation (formerly known as Raytheon), one of the world's largest aerospace and defense companies.

Mismanaged retirement pensions: In August, the litigation team helped reach a partial settlement in a class action suit filed to help employees and retirees of the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME) who lost nearly $90 million after their fiduciaries mishandled their retirement funds.

Understaffed nursing homes: Foundation attorneys filed a class action lawsuit against Alden Group, one of Illinois' biggest nursing home operators, alleging that the company intentionally understaffed its facilities, therefore neglecting residents' health and putting them in danger.

Wage theft: In 2023, Foundation lawyers filed a class action lawsuit alleging that a Maryland home care agency was underpaying its workers, many of whom were older adults living on low incomes.

Jared Soares

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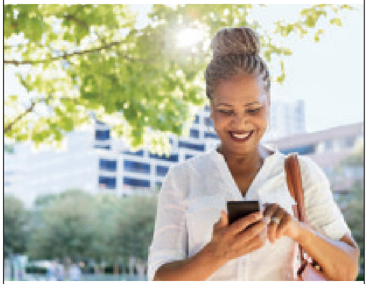

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WE'RE MAKING YOUR SIDE HEARD

AARP ADVOCATES FOR YOU

With the election behind us, political leaders are turning their attention to policies that will affect the well-being of older Americans for years to come. AARP will make sure the voice of older adults is heard loud and clear. We have powerful tools to win the hearts and minds of officials in the White House, Congress, governor's offices and state legislatures.

The tools that allow us to shape and influence policy include:

▶ **Power in numbers.** AARP is widely recognized as one of the most powerful advocacy organizations in America by lawmakers and the public alike. In part, this power reflects the sheer magnitude of our constituency: We represent and fight for more than 120 million older Americans. For example, the landmark 2022 law to reduce prescription drug prices was made possible by AARP's strong advocacy—and by people like you joining us in this essential fight.

▶ **A bipartisan approach.** AARP does not endorse candidates, make campaign contributions or have a political action committee. When we endorse legislation, we seek sponsors on both sides of the aisle. That has earned us a reputation as a trustworthy source of information that lawmakers can work with, and as an advocate with no hidden agenda.

▶ **A deep advocacy tool kit.** Over the years, we have cultivated trusted relationships with leaders in government at all levels. We have established a grassroots army of dedicated volunteers, and we and work closely with like-minded organizations.

▶ **Influence in state capitals.** In states and local communities, AARP has made real progress in addressing the health and financial security of older Americans. In 2023, we notched more than 600 advocacy wins at the state level on issues related to caregiving, paid leave, home care, taxes, and housing. And AARP has scored more than 480 legislative victories in state capitals in 2024.

▶ **Policy expertise.** In the coming years, AARP will continue our focus on strengthening Social Security and Medicare, and ensuring that older Americans are able to remain in the communities they love. We will seek ways to help hard-pressed family caregivers, contain prescription drug prices, and advocate for lower health care costs. As politicians and parties come and go, AARP's commitment is constant, reflecting our 60-year mission to make life better for older adults and their families.

—Nancy LeaMond, chief advocacy and engagement officer, AARP

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Illustration by Rob Dobi; Getty Images (2)

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THE SURVIVORS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 57

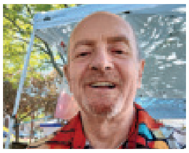
at the time. His mother was also shot, and his twin brother was hit by shrapnel. The family's expenses are astronomical, and insurance covers only a small portion. Along with buying new wheelchairs for Cooper as he grows, the family must pay for other adaptive equipment. They must also move from their two-story home, because Cooper will soon be too big to easily carry up and down stairs, and the cost to retrofit their house to meet his needs would be nearly $1 million.

Gutman didn't know the Robertses before the shooting, but a friendship began when Gutman learned how much the family was struggling and threw herself into fundraising for them. Working with the community, family and friends, she has raised several hundred thousand dollars for the Robertses and is still at it. (Funds can be donated to the Roberts family via the Help Hope Live Foundation.)

This work, in turn, has helped her heal, she says. "I feel like maybe this is why this happened to me. It's my job to help them get through this hard time in their life."

Ed Sanders, 65

Retired health claims specialist
Colorado Springs, Colorado



Date of shooting:
November 19–20, 2022

It was four minutes to midnight, and Sanders had just handed his credit card to the bartender at Club Q, a local gay bar, when the first bullet hit his back. Turning, he saw a gunman in the doorway firing into the crowd. For a moment, muzzle flashes were all that distinguished the blasts from the pounding music. Then a bullet hit Sanders' right thigh, and he fell to the floor next to a stranger who had also been shot. Sanders pressed a napkin to the stranger's wound and listened as her breathing turned ragged, then stopped. Three patrons rushed the shooter and restrained him until the police arrived. Five people died in the attack and 19 were injured.

AFTER THE shooting, after the tourniquet and ambulance ride, after the skin graft, the 18-day hospital stay and the four months of daily home nurse visits for wound dressing changes, Ed Sanders bought a new wardrobe. He got an ombré suit jacket of blue-to-silver sequins, a purple crushed-velvet jacket embroidered with a floral-and-paisley motif and a black jacket covered in silver scrollwork—to defy the bigots, he explains.

"I'm going to be more visible than ever. I'm going to speak out more," Sanders says. Representing the United Court of the Pikes Peak Empire, the local chapter of one of largest and oldest LGBTQ+ organizations in the world, he has traveled to Omaha, San Antonio, St. Louis and elsewhere, talking about that night at the club. He is also more determined than ever to enjoy life.

One thing he does less of: wearing a bathing suit in public. It's uncomfortable to have to explain the chunk of missing tissue on his thigh to strangers at the pool. It looks "kind of like an ice cream scoop has been taken out of my leg," he says. Surgeons tried to repair the damage with tissue from his hip, but less than 40 percent of the skin graft took. The pain of that procedure was almost as bad as getting shot, Sanders says, so he's not eager to try again.

He gets around fine, though his preexisting limp—a result of earlier knee and hip replacements—has become more pronounced. The night of the shooting, he was carrying a cane topped with a raven, and it blocked one of the bullets intended for him. Sanders keeps the cane on a hook behind his front door, the raw wood visible where the bullet splintered it. The cane serves as a reminder that, as bad as his injuries were, they could have been worse.

He knows a long life is not guaranteed, he says. "But I'm going to make the most of the time I have." ■

Rachael Bale, a freelance journalist in Denver, is a former executive editor of National Geographic.

Courtesy Ed Sanders

CREDITS: On the Cover/Michelle Yeoh: Wardrobe credits: Jumpsuit: Tom Ford; Earrings: JACQUEMUS; Shoes: Amina Muaddi. **This is 50 Page 28:** *from top: Elf*, *Home Alone*, *Scrooged*, *A Charlie Brown Christmas*, *The Year Without Santa Claus*, *Planes, Trains and Automobiles*: Alamy; *Die Hard*, *A Christmas Story*: Photofest; Minnie Driver: Mike Marsland/WireImage/Getty Images; Jackpot Pinball Arcade: Ryan Donmoyer; Pinball Hall of Fame: TravelerSD/Alamy. **Page 31:** *from top:* Band Aid: Brian Aris/Camera Press/Redux Pictures; USA for Africa: Alamy; Album covers *from left:* Alamy; Getty Images; Bono: Duncan Raban/Popperfoto/Getty Images; Kool and the Gang: United Archives/GmbH/Alamy; Dylan and Wonder: CBS/Getty Images; Jennings: Lester Cohen/Getty Images; Spa: Courtesy Great Ocean Road Resort. **Michelle Yeoh Page 32-34:** Wardrobe credits: Jumpsuit: Tom Ford; Earrings: JACQUEMUS; Shoes: Amina Muaddi. **Page 34:** Wardrobe credits: Knitwear: Surkana; Denim: Icon Denim; Earrings: Bottega Veneta; Rings: L'Atelier Nawbar. **Movies For Grownups Page 44:** *From left:* Dominic Leon/Courtesy A24; Kurt Iswarienko/FX **Page 45:** *Clockwise from top left:* Courtesy Magnolia Pictures; Macall Polay/Courtesy Searchlight Pictures; Getty Images. *Center:* Courtesy Paramount Pictures **Page 46:** *Clockwise from top left:* Courtesy Focus Features; Courtesy Apple TV+ (2); Courtesy Netflix; Courtesy Universal Studios **Big 5-Oh Page 72:** Bradley Cooper primary photo: Alberto Rodriguez/Variety/Getty Images. Clockwise from top: Jeff Kravitz/Getty Images; Alamy (2); Jason McDonald/Netflix /Everett Collection; Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures/Everett Collection; Alamy. Seacrest: Jordan Strauss/AP; Gilbert: Xavier Collin/AP; Tomei: Cindy Ord/Getty Images; Vedder: Michael Buckner/Variety/Getty Images; Washington: Ethan Miller/Getty Images; King: Paul Morigi/Getty Images

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We greatly value your feedback about AARP The Magazine—including what you'd like us to cover next. Here are several ways to send us your comments on stories, and to offer your suggestions for topics, people, trends and issues to report on in future issues of the magazine. While we read (and listen) carefully to all submissions, due to the high volume we cannot respond to every question or return submitted materials.

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SOLUTIONS TO PUZZLES ON PAGE 65

G	A	P	E	■	A	B	E	T	■	J	A	M
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HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Bradley Cooper

(JANUARY 5): Whether he's playing a musician, chef or Navy SEAL, this actor and filmmaker is known for fully inhabiting his roles.

EARLY YEARS: Cooper grew up near Philadelphia and, like his character in *Silver Linings Playbook*, is a fan of the Eagles.

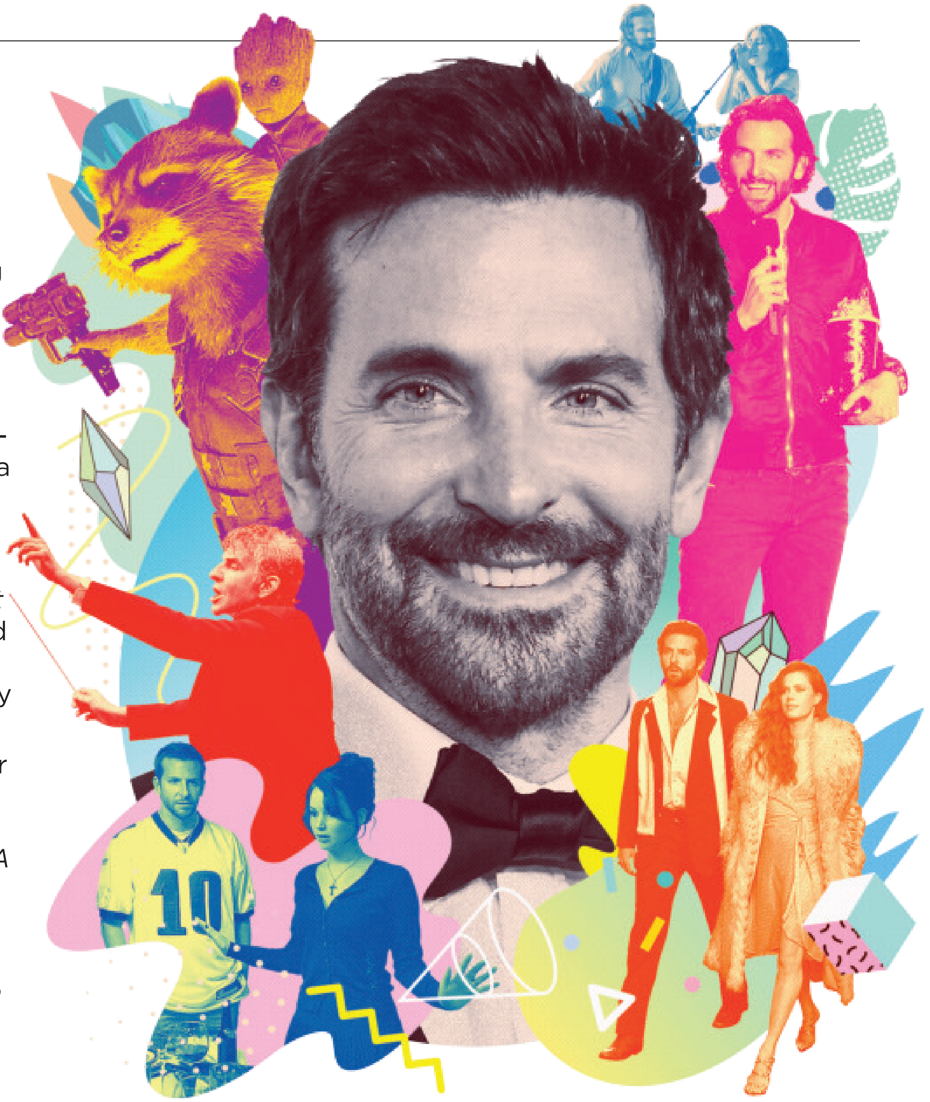
★ $13 ★
billion

Amount Cooper's films have grossed

'ELEPHANT' FAN: As a kid, Cooper saw the film *The Elephant Man* and was inspired to act. In 2014, he starred in a Broadway version.

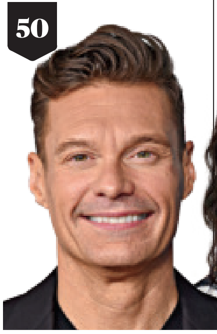
METHOD MAN: Cooper has acquired specific skills for his on-screen roles, including playing guitar and piano (*A Star Is Born*), cooking (*Burnt*) and marksmanship (*American Sniper*).

QUOTABLE: "Your voice is everything as an actor," Cooper told *The New York Times* in 2018. "It's like plugging in the electrical cord to truth."—*Whitney Matheson*

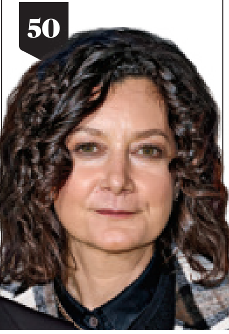


MORE MILESTONE BIRTHDAYS

Ryan Seacrest
DECEMBER 24
The *American Idol* host recently took over from Pat Sajak to helm *Wheel of Fortune*.



Sara Gilbert
JANUARY 29
The Conners actor created *The Talk*, which is about to wrap up a 15-season TV run.



Marisa Tomei
DECEMBER 4
On *Finding Your Roots*, the Oscar winner discovered she is related to Julianne Moore.

Eddie Vedder
DECEMBER 23
The Pearl Jam singer has released three solo albums, including one of ukulele songs.

Denzel Washington
DECEMBER 28
The acclaimed actor is set to star in Shakespeare's *Othello* on Broadway.

Gayle King
DECEMBER 28
The *CBS Mornings* cohost welcomed a second grandchild to her family in 2024.

Photo credits and information on page 71

ILLUSTRATION BY SEAN McCABE

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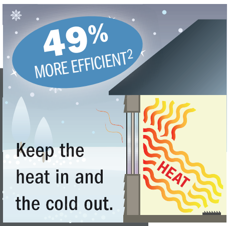
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[1] **DETAILS OF OFFER:** Offer expires 2/28/2025. Not valid with other offers or prior purchases. Buy one (1) window or entry/patio door, get one (1) window or entry/patio door 40% off, and 12 months no money down, no monthly payments, no interest when you purchase four (4) or more windows or entry/patio doors between 11/23/2024 and 2/28/2025. 40% off windows and entry/patio doors are less than or equal to lowest cost window or entry/patio door in the order. Additional $50 off each window or patio door, minimum purchase of four (4) required, taken after initial discount(s), when you purchase by 2/28/2025. Subject to credit approval. 12-month Promo Period: while no payments are due, interest accrues but is waived if the loan is paid in full before the Promo Period expires. Any unpaid balance owed after the Promo Period, plus accrued interest, will be paid in installments based on the terms disclosed in the customer's loan agreement. Financing provided by various equal opportunity lenders. Savings comparison based on purchase of a single unit at list price. Available at participating locations and offer applies throughout the service area. See your local Renewal by Andersen location for details. License numbers available at renewalbyandersen.com/license. Some Renewal by Andersen locations are independently owned and operated. [2] Values are based on comparison of Renewal by Andersen® double-hung window U-Factor to the U-Factor for clear dual-pane glass non-metal frame default values from the 2006, 2009, 2012, 2015, and 2018 International Energy Conservation Code "Glazed Fenestration" Default Tables. [3] Based on testing of 10 double-hung units per ASTM E2068 20 years after installation. [†] It is the only warranty among top selling window companies that meets all of the following requirements: easy to understand terms, unrestricted transferability, installation coverage, labor coverage, geographically unrestricted, coverage for exterior color, insect screens and hardware, and no maintenance requirement. Visit renewalbyandersen.com/nationsbest for details. [‡] Reviews among leading national full-service window replacement companies. January 2024 Reputation.com. "Renewal by Andersen" and all other marks where denoted are trademarks of their respective owners. © 2025 Andersen Corporation. All rights reserved. RBA13700

*Using U.S. and imported parts.

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†Nicholas Hall's global CHC database, DB6, 2021 value sales at MSP